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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"I WANT TO REPAIR A CRUEL INJURY DONE YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND!" THE WOMAN SOBBERD.

SIR LYNN'S LITTLE MAYBUD.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

SPRING, budding young spring, with its wealth of snowy blossoms, fresh, fragrant, and virginal in its maidenly purity, has usurped the chill of winter's grim presence.

The green woods kiss the mild, wooing breeze, while the waves are leaping and dancing joyously, as the sun darts its magical rays of glowing warmth, turning it into shimmering gold and silver sheen, as they ripple and lap the shore.

All nature is glad; even the trees send forth a murmur of praise, and nod their blossom-crowned heads in harmony with the feathered choir which have built their summer abodes in sheltering bowers, and are piping forth a flood of delicious melody.

A pink may-tree is supporting something not quite so light as a bird, but a dainty little intruder without wings, whose tiny feet scarcely bend the branch she is perched upon; her hands are clutching at the best and rosiest sprays, and she coos with pleasure as she presses the sweet coral bunches to her rosy lips, and sips their nectar.

Fluffy tendrils of rich chestnut hair become entangled with the rude embraces of Mr. Hawthorn, all unheeded, though, by the maiden who is revelling in her freedom and wild untidiness.

"Catch, stupid!" she shouts down to a curly-pated boy of fourteen, who is busily engaged sucking a thrush's egg he had contrived to sneak without his cousin's knowledge. "Why, all the blossom will get spoiled!"

"Bother the flowers; now if it were nuts or apples a fellow might feel a little interested, but this prickly stuff—why, its rubbish!" retorts Hal Rydon.

"I'll smother you with my prickliest bits

If you do not obey me instantly," she says, merrily.

Her sunny, roguish look is too much for Hal, and forth he stretches a big straw hat to receive the spoil.

"Oh! I say!" he suddenly exclaims. "Here's a pretty go! Do hurry down. Sir Lynn Myron is just turning round by the stable; he will see you as sure as eggs are eggs."

She flings her lapful of treasures pell-mell on the luckless head of Master Hal, and commences a frantic retreat to terra firma. But a vicious bough catches hold of her skirt and makes her a prisoner, to her dismay.

Nearer and nearer approaches the figure of a gentleman, who looks at the picture before him with an amused smile.

"Permit me to assist you," Sir Lynn Myron says, trying to appear serious, but failing egregiously.

"Hal will help me," she cries, pettishly.

"He is scarcely strong enough, I fear. Come, put your foot on my shoulder."

"I won't, so there," she retorts, almost fiercely. "Can't you leave me alone when you see me in this terrible plight!"

Tears of mortification are in her voice, and her bonny brown eyes; this settles the matter for the Baronet, who entreates no longer.

"Turn your back," suggests Hal, as if by inspiration. "Vetah is ashamed to come down while you are here."

"How dense I am," returns Sir Lynn, apologetically, as he instantly takes a searching scrutiny of the landscape.

Away she tugs with vehement violence, till the skirt and she nearly part company, and a pair of delicate ankles and trim little feet are disclosed.

She makes a mad effort to extricate herself from her perch, and down she plumps with a crash into a pair of strong arms that gather the little trembling form to his breast with as much gentleness as if she were a wounded dove.

"I hope you are not really hurt!" he says, anxiously.

"Yes, I am," she answers, ruefully, as sparkling tears gather in her eyes. "My elbow pains me dreadfully."

In a moment the sleeve is raised tenderly, and a cruel scratch reveals itself, from which a crimson jet is flowing.

Quick as thought his handkerchief is bound round the soft white arm, and he retains it much longer than the occasion demands. It is such a pretty, rounded, dimpled thing, and the owner is so demure and meek, that he almost wishes that young shaver of a cousin would betake himself off on a marauding expedition among the birds' nests.

"You were very wilful, little lady, to reject my aid," he says, mischievously, "and a speedy punishment followed, though, I admit, no one regrets the accident more than I; but there, some little girls will be naughty in spite of advice," smiling into the sweet face saucily.

"I am not a child, Sir Lynn," she stammers, indignantly. "Why, I am a real woman now, and sit at table with mamma and papa."

This reply evokes a peal of laughter from her surgeon in spite of himself.

"May I venture to ask how old you are to participate in such delightful ceremonies!" he asks, banteringly.

"Seventeen last month," she returns, with an important little nod of her head.

"Oh, seventeen!" he repeats, sagely. "That is a very good age; that is a—well—What the deuce do I mean?" he thinks, at a loss what to say lest he should utter something to vex this capricious maid.

"You are only making fun of me, I verily believe," she says, archly, peeping shyly up into his handsome face to see if he is in earnest or not.

"Never were my thoughts more serious," he hastens to protest. "Why, my opinion of seventeen is—"

"What, now, are these thoughts?" she puts in. "You seem to find it difficult to explain them. It is no use trying to deceive me. I can see you think me a foolish, giddy thing; but there, I will forgive you if you promise not to tell anyone how you caught me to-day up that spiteful tree. Mamma would never cease scolding me, I know, and as for Blanche she would tease me for ever and a day."

"Can you be sure of our friend Hal?"

"He!" she repeats, with a wealth of love and confidence. "Why, he wouldn't peach for the world."

"I wish she only thought as much of me as she evidently does of him," he thinks, rather diamally, as his eyes followed that young gentleman, who, not wishing to make the unpopular third party, wisely betook himself to a fish-pond, where he was amusing himself by flinging brick-bats at the frisky roach and dace who were bold enough to take sly peeps at the dry portion of the earth.

Aloud he says,—

"Master Hal is a fortunate boy to have inspired you with so much confidence. I can only hope to gain some, too, by telling you wild horses

wouldn't drag my secret from me since it is your wish I should not divulge it."

"You are as good and nice as Hal then," she says, gleefully, clapping her hands with childish delight.

"Confound that boy, I shall hate him soon," he thinks. "Deuced hard to be compared to a young cub like him just as I thought we were getting on so well."

"Hal and I must be going, or we shall get no end of a wiggling; but I—I would like to say how grateful I am to you for catching me, and binding my arm. It was really very kind of you."

She looks so provokingly sweet and irresistible that he can scarcely refrain from snatching a kiss from those rosy lips.

"If you could be in a like plight every moment of the day without the hurt I believe I should be the happiest mortal in existence; these arms are not accustomed to catch such priceless treasures."

Her eyes seek the ground, for there is a fiery sparkle in the Baronet's she cannot, artless as she is, dare to meet unflinchingly; and he, noting the snowy lids averted from his impassioned gaze, takes comfort and becomes elated at her sweet confusion.

Gathering her tattered gown as well as she can round her she calls her cousin, then holds out her hand, which bears a goodly array of scratches, and says "good-bye."

"Not good-bye," he hastens to protest, "au-revoir sounds better; good-bye always seems to me like the knell of all earthly happiness and hope."

"Then I will humour you as you have me, and never say good-bye to you."

"I would that you could carry it out in earnest," he said, earnestly.

"So I will," she says gaily, as she catches hold of Hal's hand and trips out of his sight.

"How little she knows what those words convey to me," he thinks, moodily. "It is only six weeks since I first saw her, and I am positively burning with a consuming love that seems unquenchable. What a consummate idiot I must be! Why, she is only a child in years, thought and nature, while I (here he flicked his cane viciously at a bed of variegated tulips) am a—" but the sentence was never finished.

"Hal, dear, you might tell me if I showed much of my feet—or—legs!" this insinuatingly, yet blushing furiously at the awful thought.

"I only know I could see a pink bit of ribbon dangling down that looked like a garter."

"Oh, Hal! it isn't true," she gasps, in dismay; "you are only teasing me."

"What do you ask a fellow for if you say I am telling crams!"

"What I meant to say," this conciliatingly, "is, did Sir Lynn see my—my garter!" she asks, desperately.

"How do I know!" he answers, callously. "I suppose he did if he had eyes."

"You are a nasty, disagreeable, spiteful boy, and I shall not give you that half-sovereign I promised when papa gives me my allowance, so there."

"I was only having a lark. Why, Sir Lynn is too much of a gentleman to look at a girl's legs," he replies, coaxingly.

This assertion pacified the little damsel, who whispered,—

"You shall have the half-sovereign, Hal, dear;" and having gained the Priory—a charming, rambling, old ivy-covered mansion—she scrambles through a side entrance, then through a conservatory, up to her own particular sanctum, to obliterate all traces of her escapade.

CHAPTER II.

"WHY, here is Sir Lynn coming through the lodge-gate," observes Mrs. Rydon. "It is quite significant. Run, Blanche, and change to your best dress, it suits you to perfection."

Blanche did not stay to hear more, but flew upstairs to robe herself according to her own sweet will.

Not a word is said to Vetah about her dress.

Mrs. Rydon cannot conceive any gentleman could call three times and bask in the light of so lovely a presence as the imperious beauty of the house without being singled.

When Sir Lynn enters the room that little lady gives him a demure, half-saucy, half-timid glance as he takes her hand, then becomes absorbed in some interesting book which certainly requires seemingly a vast deal of attention, for the sunny little head is persistently bent over the pages much to the Baronet's chagrin.

Presently Blanche glides in, a beautiful vision, clad in pale blue, a posy of cream roses at her throat and waist.

Sir Lynn looked at her with genuine admiration, and well he might, for Blanche Rydon was very fair to gaze upon.

"I have come to solicit a boon, Miss Rydon!" "Indeed!" she says graciously, nestling down with careless ease on a dark blue velvet lounge which threw up the exquisite shade of her dress to perfection. "May I be pardoned if I exhibit a wee bit of impatience to learn what it is!" tapping a tiny foot playfully.

"I—I want you all to come and storm my bachelor abode; to give me the sunshine of your presence next Thursday."

"What says mamma!"

"I have waited to ask you first," he replies. A radiant smile of triumph passes over her face at the pointed compliment.

"Well, I think I can promise that mamma will grant your request. Is it not so, mamma!"

"Certainly, my darling; I shall only be too pleased to gratify any wish of Sir Lynn's, more especially as it will be a real pleasure to us in this case."

"Do you indorse your mamma's kind reply!" he asks poor Vetah, who feels forlorn and miserably jealous by this time.

"I—I," she stammers. "Please don't ask me; I always do what mamma bids." Her under-lip quivers, and she fairly feels she could sob at the glaring contrast of her dowdy grey gown and fluffy hair straying over her broad, white forehead, with her sister's delicate-tinted toilet, and the fashionably-dressed hair around the haughty little head.

"Vetah is scarcely out, you see, Sir Lynn; so we will not include her if you please," cuts in Mrs. Rydon. "She must get a little more experience before she can be completely emancipated from the schoolroom."

"I particularly desire Miss Vetah should make one of the party," he answers, firmly. "Youth is the best time to bestow pleasure and receive it, in my opinion. I have rather original ideas, you may say, but they are deeply rooted."

Mrs. Rydon is too experienced a tactician to argue the subject with her visitor, so gives in with a sweet smile, and he gains his point.

As soon as the door closes on the Baronet, Blanche commences to deplore the scantiness of her wardrobe, and worries her mother into a nervous heat upon the stern necessity of her having a new dress at all hazards, to suit the momentous occasion.

"Where is papa! I will go to him myself," Blanche says, resolutely. "If he wishes me to captivate a rich party he must not stint me in a paltry few pounds; it's ridiculous to be so parsimonious with the eldest daughter of the house."

"He is in his study. Perhaps it would be as well for you to ask him;" her mother observes somewhat reluctantly. "He may grant you your wish. I am sure it would not do for me to broach such a subject, for I know your papa is very short."

"When I become Lady Myron I will repay both of you; he is sure to settle a very handsome yearly allowance on me," she says, in a burst of generosity.

A cloud of pain comes into Vetah's face, which she bends still lower and lower over her book, pretending to an absorbing interest. Her fingers feel cold and clammy; every word that has fallen from her sister's lips have stabbed the sensitive pulsating little heart.

"I shall be the proudest mother in the land when you become Lady Myron, and the happiest;



for I feel sure Sir Lynn is a charming and amiable, as well as worthy man."

Mother and daughter embrace each other affectionately, and without giving a thought to the little silent figure by the window, Blanche swept out of the room to coax her doting father to give her a twenty-pound cheque, perfectly assured she had made a conquest, and won the heart of Sir Lynn Myron.

On the appointed Thursday Sir Lynn stands on the steps of his ancestral home to welcome his guests. First to alight from the carriage is Blanche, in a symphony of delicate blue and pink, shrouded in filmy lace, a marvel of the millinery art. But the host's keen glance is attracted to Vetch, who is arrayed in a simple white dress with a bunch of deep pink may blossom at her throat.

He drank in the sweetness of her fresh young beauty; this simple Maybud, as he termed her mentally, was the one gem on earth he coveted beyond all treasures.

"You must not run away, you are my captive," he pleads, detaining her from following her party who were exploring the magnificent conservatories.

"Do let me go," she implores, trembling with conflicting emotion.

"Little Maybud," he whispers, tenderly, "you did not say that when I bound your wounded arm. Come, look into my eyes, and see if there is aught to alarm you."

She permits him to hold her hands just one blissful moment, gives a timid glance up into those love-laden eyes, then tries to free herself from his strong clasp, but in vain.

"They will miss me; and oh! Sir Lynn, mamma will be angry. Let me go; oh! do let me go!"

"Sweet little trembler, you ask me an impossibility at this moment, but I will release you on one condition—give me that piece of may and wear this rose instead;" detaching a lovely creamy tea-rose from his button hole.

"If I do you will not keep me!" she asks, timidly, burying her rosy lips in the delicate petals of her treasure.

"No; but I shall exact payment for my rose," this with a mischievous smile. "The recipient of such an offering incurs a debt which must be paid."

Not a suspicion crosses her mind of the payment he means to exact; and before she realises his intention he snatches a kiss from the budding lips, one of rapturous bliss to him.

"How dare you!" she says, fiercely, stamping her foot with anger. "What would Blanche and all of them say?"

"What care I!" he replies, recklessly. "Come Maybud, I must now descend from Elysium to earth, prostrate earth, for here they are upon us."

Away she darts like a lapwing through a side door, but not before her mother catches sight of her hurried exit.

"How bold that child is. It is really provoking to be hampered with hoydens, especially when one is visiting!" Mrs. Rydon whispers to Blanche, in a vexed tone.

"What will Sir Lynn think!" echoes Blanche, peevishly; "a chit of a child indeed, to monopolise all his time and attention. It is quite too dreadful."

"Vetch is right enough, my dear; she is only a little giddy," Mr. Rydon adds, by way of pouring oil on troubled waters. "You have a very fine piece, Sir Lynn!" Mr. Rydon remarks, animatedly.

"I trust my little girl has not been boring you, Sir Lynn?" says Mrs. Rydon, in her most alvery tone.

"Quite the reverse, my dear madam; she has been charming me immensely," he rejoins, enthusiastically.

"Will you show me the vineries, Sir Lynn?" pleads Blanche, in a tone of sweet imperiousness. Her cream-gloved hand is laid in playful command on his arm, and away he takes her out into the grounds, through a high box hedge into the head gardener's sacred domain.

"Come, Edward, my dear, we are *de trop*; can not you see Blanche is bent on a little flirtation,"

urges Mrs. Rydon, as her husband is about to rush after the retreating couple.

"Oh! is it like that?" returns her obtuse spouse, giving vent to a prolonged whistle. "You ladies are sages in wisdom where matters of the heart are concerned!" he adds, admiringly; "and you, my dear, are matchless in every thing!"

It was no flattery of the courteous husband, who deemed his handsome partner the incarnation of all that was good and beautiful.

His words evoke a blush of gratified pleasure and affection as rich in its carnation hue and as pure as the day he led her through a breathless admiring throng from the altar.

If husbands would only stop to consider how priceless are these sweet little words of praise to their faithful wives, whose cares multiply with each succeeding year, what stores of undying faith, patience and love would be garnered up for them sufficient to even forget they were mortals with very clayey instincts!

Crouching in a corner is Vetch, an unseen watcher of the pair who sail within a stone's throw of her; Blanche, ravishingly beautiful, leaning on his arm, and ringing the spring evening stillness with her rippling laughter.

"How dare he kiss me when he likes her best!" she moans, pitifully. "I hate him! I—I wish I had never seen him, that I do!"

A mist of blinding tears come into her brown eyes, and her heart throbs with keen, poignant anguish at his perfidy.

The evening is spent most enjoyably by Blanche, who, being a brilliant singer and player, sings her prettiest songs to please her host and to show off the fine quality of her voice.

"Will you favour me with a song?" Sir Lynn whispers to Vetch.

"No, I never sing," she replies, tremulously, "that is, I mean never before anybody."

"Do not believe her; she sings like a lark, Sir Lynn!" intervenes her father, who overhears the request, "only she is rather shy."

"Indeed, papa, I cannot sing to-night," she falters.

"You will, for my sake, when I assure you a refusal will make me very unhappy," he whispers.

"How can you be so false to Blanche!" she returns, reproachfully. "I will not sing to-night!" this defiantly.

A puzzled expression comes into his face; he cannot understand the capricious little maid, who seems to-day all brittle.

"What on earth do you mean about being false to your sister! I cannot comprehend you," he says, nervously.

"I am hot, and, oh! so ill," she gasps, trying to rise and escape from him.

He follows her out on the terrace in spite of her remonstrances; and there, beneath the all-very radiance of a young May moon, stands watching the pale, angry face, more beautiful in his eyes in its anger than anyone of Eve's daughters he had ever beheld.

"I will never forgive you if you get me into disgrace with mamma. My head aches; have some pity on me, and leave me here in the cool."

"What have I done to cause you to be so unlike your gracious little self? What did you mean about my faithlessness! Are you trying to tease me, sweet one?"

"If you do not go in this instant, I declare I will never speak to you again, Sir Lynn," she parades, almost resentfully, her loyal nature revolting at his fickle conduct to her regal sister.

"So I have found you at last, Sir Lynn!" rings out the alvery voice of Blanche, tapping him playfully with her fan, "and star-gazing I verily believe. Now you can help me to find the big bear."

"Hang the big bear," thinks the Baronet, "there seems nothing but vexations to-day," following with his eyes the swift exit of his idol, and longing to pursue her.

"I am not very wise in astronomy," he stammers; "it is too abstruse altogether for my mind to grasp."

"Savely you admire the splendour of the heavens such a delicious night as this?" she pursues, sweetly.

"He will take the hint and allude to my beauty surpassing the stars, etc.," she thinks, constraining his preoccupied manner to excessive admiration and nervousness.

"If you mean the moon, Miss Rydon, why I endorse your opinion. It is very clear and bright to-night."

"What a terribly backward wooer he is," she murmurs to herself, placing her jewelled arm carelessly on the balustrade to show off its rounded beauty. "I know he is dying to propose, and yet he is so stupid; it is quite tiresome. There are moons and moons," she whispers, significantly.

"I must say I never give them much attention," he answers, abstractedly, perfectly deaf and blind to her blandishments, "and the air seems uncommonly fresh for a lady in evening dress," looking at her fair neck and bare arms with fatherly concern, not a pulse beating faster at their glowing charms or the starry eyes that are sparkling with encouraging lights to inspire this bashful lover to make the declaration she believes he is dying to make.

"I am quite warm," she replies, [naively; "the air is as soft as an Italian night. I quite love the South."

"I like it very well, but not to go into raptures over it," he observes; "eternal blue skies, and seas, and sunshine glaring upon one may be a thing of beauty, but as to its being a joy for ever is a question."

"Do you dislike sunshine, Sir Lynn?" she laughs.

"Perpetual, yes; a Peri would pale upon me if she gave me nothing but smiles."

"Then you like women who can look stormy as well as sunny?"

"I confess to a weakness for a few pouts to diversify the honeyed sunniness of a pretty face which, to my mind, becomes insipid if the eyes never kindle into anger, or the face flush with displeasure."

"How original you are. Yet, somehow, though your ideas at first differ from mine, they impress me after a while with the same feeling. I hope you have not too large a share of magnetic force, Sir Lynn, to convert me to your opinions!" this demurely, as she pulls to pieces the spray of flowers at her bosom, and scatters the fragrant blossoms recklessly at her dainty satin-shod feet, on which glimmer soft pearls.

There are pearly tears in the pretty blue eyes, too—tears of wounded pride and vexation at his perverse coldness.

"Permit me to restore you your flowers, Miss Rydon," he says, stooping, and trying to gather up the fragments.

"They are useless now," she says, pettishly, flinging the proffered crushed things spitefully down on to the turf beneath, and dashing aside the heavy curtains, and entering the drawing-room in a regular pet.

"I thought he would have replaced the flowers for some gathered by his own hand," she thought, angrily. "Instead of that, he presented me with my own back, though they were crushed and spoiled; he is downright cruel."

"Where is the rose I gave you?" he inquires of Vetch, when he gets a moment to whisper to her.

"Gone," she retorts, holding down her head, shyly.

"You have flung it away," he says, a quiver of pain in his voice. "You might have respected the poor flower even if you despised the giver."

"I—I did not hurt it," she says, innocently. "It was I who tried to destroy anything so sweet."

"Thanks for so small a mercy in sparing my gift, though the owner is left out in the cold," he replies somewhat bitterly.

There is an awful pause; she finds herself unable to retort glibly, now that his eyes are fixed reproachfully upon her.

He holds her hand in a firm grasp that almost pains her when he places her in the carriage, and she flinches; yet they have not turned the corner of the road before she hugs and kisses the glove he had clasped.

"Charming place, Myron Court!" observes

Mr. Rydon. "The only thing it lacks is a mistress; but, there, that can soon be remedied."

"And will, no doubt!" repeats his wife, confidently, and looking keenly at Blanche to see how she takes it.

"There are several alterations I should have made if I were mistress, mamma," Blanche cuts in; "especially in the furniture, which is gloomy, worm-eaten old stuff; especially in the large dining-room. I dislike spindle-legged chairs and tables; they look like decrepit men who are tottering into the grave;" this with a little shudder.

"Brightness and prettiness is your forte, dear," her mother observes, gently. "And I am not sure whether your taste is not the best after all, for there is enough to remind us of the decay of all earthly things without surrounding ourselves with the faded grandeur of our dead and gone grandfathers and mothers."

"I positively hate garish things," interposes the silent Vetah, defending valiantly the appointments of Sir Lynn's home. "I love those dear quaint old chairs and tables."

"You are a little silly," retorts Blanche freely, "and speak your mind a great deal too freely. Why, I was as shy as a mouse at your age. I really am quite at a loss to know what Sir Lynn will think of you flying about like some wild creature from room to room. You must learn to be less obtrusive."

"Vetah is only a child in experience as yet, my dear," interposes her father; "she will get more staid as years increase. We must not expect her to assume the grand manners of a duchess, my love!"

"I doubt if she ever could," replies her sister, tartly. "I know I never acted the rôle of a part boyden."

"You are totally different natures, my love," her mother says, conciliatingly, wondering what has occurred to rattle the usual serenity of her eldest daughter.

"Well, how did you enjoy the feast?" asks Hal. "I think it was a jolly shame I wasn't invited too. I expect you had no end of fun and good things."

"I have got a peach and a real ribston pippin for you," Vetah replies, gleefully. "I pocketed them at dessert."

"You are a real out-and-out brick!" says Hal, delightedly, "and I'll take you out fishing to-morrow if you would like to come. But, I say, did he peach?"

"What do you mean?" opening wide her eyes in perplexity.

"Did he tell aunt about your tumbling off the tree?"

"Sir Lynn is a gentleman, not a cad," her eyes flashing indignantly at the mere insinuation of such treachery from the man whom she felt in her heart was the soul of truth, even if he were a bit of a flirt.

"You needn't fire up so fiercely. I like him immensely, and so does Cousin Blanche. When she marries him I mean to have a good time of it with his dogs and horses."

"How dare you discuss what you don't know anything about! Blanche would never forgive you if she knew," replies Vetah, acridly.

"You girls are a lot of muffs—you think a fellow hasn't eyes and ears," he retorts, in an injured tone. "If you don't want us to know your secrets, keep them to yourselves."

"You are a nasty, meddling little ape, there," she snaps; "and as for going out fishing with you I refuse, so there."

"Oh! you can sulk if you like, and flare up at a fellow because someone has put you out; but I don't care a fig."

His apple and peach he places on the table with offended dignity untasted. This is too much for Vetah, who, feeling she has been unkind to her favourite, flings her soft dimpled arms round his neck and kisses the sun-tanned brow of his little lordship again and again till the old gay sparkle of good humour is restored, and the apple and peach are enjoyed in peace and amity.

When her bonny head nestled on her pillow that night a creamy rose is held in one soft white

hand, its sweet perfume mingling with the fragrance of her breath.

CHAPTER III.

THREE days have come and gone since the memorable visit to Myron Court, and Vetah has wandered about the house and grounds listlessly and aimlessly. Not even the merry sallies of her friend Hal can dispel the melancholy which possesses her.

She is ensconced on a low basket chair in her sanctum trying to commit to paper the features of Hal, as she schools herself to believe; but, strange to relate, her pencil has a knack of producing a man's face instead of a regular boy's.

"How funny!" she mutters, "that his face should come instead of Hal's," and soon her lap is strewn with a dozen or so of sketches of Sir Lynn's handsome features.

All at once she is startled by the abrupt entrance of her sister.

Quick as thought the tell-tale pieces are snatched up and rolled into a ball, a guilty flush rushing into Vetah's face at being caught in such an occupation.

"How hot you look, Vetah!" Blanche commences querulously. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing," hanging down her head confusedly.

"Reading, or drawing some useless rubbish, I suppose," this snappishly. "I came to you to give me a little comfort. I am wretchedly unhappy."

"Unhappy!" repeats Vetah in amazement, "has mamma been cross with you?"

"Mamma! no certainly not. Are there no miseries to be borne except domestic ones, child?"

"I don't know," this dolefully. "Tell me, and then perhaps I can comfort you."

Flinging off her feather-plumed hat recklessly, and herself into a cosy chair, she bursts forth.

"It is too bad, too humiliating, just as I thought I had secured him."

"Secured who?" asks Vetah, in surprise.

"Who? Why Sir Lynn, of course. Who else is there in this place worth having. How dense you are!"

"What has he done?" she asks, tremulously.

"I'll tell you," trying to dash away the large tears that are welling in her eyes, tears of wounded vanity and mortification. "I—I caught him gazing intently upon a piece of faded may-blossom" (a rising sob will not be suppressed at this juncture), "then he actually kissed it again and again."

A delicious thrill of joy leaps into her heart as she listens to her sister's dismal confession as the thought flashes, "Can it be my spray he kissed? And have I acted as the false betrayer of my sister's happiness? Does she really care for him! Oh! how she would hate me if she thought that was my piece of may," and she tries to offer consolation to the stricken one, though her conscience pricks her for her perfidy.

"Perhaps you were mistaken!"

"What nonsense!" she replies, pettishly. "I was in the copple, and was just going to him, flattering myself that he would be absurdly pleased, when I caught him kissing and caressing that odious may, and then place it in his pocket-book solemnly, and return it to his breast pocket. I was too miserable to wait to see more. Oh! the bitterness of it all, to know he is in love with somebody else, while I have been mad enough to imagine his gifts of flowers and fruit were tokens of his affection for me. I feel I detest him, and cordially wish I had never seen him," this with spiteful vehemence, a great tear splashing on to her hand. "I will tell mamma, and see what she thinks of his pretended attentions. I am sure I should never have thought of him a second moment if his manner had not been so pointed."

"It is very hard to bear," Vetah falters out spasmodically, thoroughly despairing herself for her deceit.

Wiping her eyes with her lace handkerchief she rises and leaves the room, muttering—

"You are too much of a child to enter into

my feelings, and instead of giving me a ray of comfort only fret me with your stupidity."

Vetah watches the tall, willowy form, so stately in its reposeful carriage, and wonders again and again if it really was the piece of may he had begged from her, that had caused all the mischief.

"Is it possible or probable," she muses, "for Sir Lynn to care for so insignificant a being as I, when he could have our lovely Blanche?" Then she gazes intently at herself in the glass, tugs at her rebellious curls, that refuse to lie orderly for brush or comb, opens wide those wondrous eyes, so childlike in their innocence; opens wide her mouth, and gives a smile of approval at the rows of even little pearls, and nods her head sagely, murmuring: "No doubt. Yes, my teeth are nice, and—but as for my hair, why a birch-broom in a fit, as Hal tells me, is a capital simile; and as for my eyes, well, sincers is a downright name for them, as he says. It is too bad to be such a plain creature; what a delicious feeling it must be to feel and know you are really lovely!" And as she smiles in the mirror, she little dreams what a really bewitching fairy she looks, with those soulful eyes brimming over with fun one instant, to fill with passionate latent fires the next, and the fascination that lurks in that tiny rosette of a mouth, which tantalises a man, who gazes at it too long, to rifle sweet, stolen kisses from it.

"It cannot be my wretched bit of may," she says, shaking her head despondently. "It would be ridiculous to think of it. Fancy me decked in velvet and satin brocade, seated at that great table, doing the honours as Lady Myron! Why, all my guests would laugh at such a mite as me."

Down she pops at her tiny round table, and rehearses the scene.

"Try some of this *salami* of partridges, it is excellent," trying to assume the airs of a *grande dame*; "and the perigord pie is excellent. Do permit me to send you some. I fancy that was said beautifully."

"Who the dickens are you talking to?" shouts Hal, rushing in with Titmouse, a huge Irish retriever, who certainly belied his name, if size was anything to do with appropriateness.

"I was playing at being a lady."

"What boah! Why don't you come for a scamper with me and old Titmouse, it's awfully jolly out after the shower. Just look out at the grass and the gravel! Why, it looks splendid!"

"So I will," she replies, jumping up and kissing Titmouse's curly old head in a transport of delight.

Away they all scamper, Hal with a wild war-whoop, the dog leaping about madly, mad with pleasure, and sending forth deep bass yelps of joy.

As they are returning through the elder-thicket, who should come swinging along but Sir Lynn.

"Just the young gentleman I wanted to see. I have been inquiring for you;" this as he shakes Vetah's hand, and dons his straw hat. "I was told you were out somewhere about the lanes."

Vetah's cheeks flush, and her heart beats like a clock, for she can feel his eyes are fixed searchingly on her conscious face.

"I have come to ask you to go for a drive with me to-morrow in my new dog-cart! Kitty is longing for a good spin," meaning a favourite mare. "Will you come?"

"Won't I, Sir Lynn, if aunt says I may," Hal replies, excitedly. "I love driving."

"Then you shall do the chief part of it," he says, kindly.

"What a trump he is! Don't I wish he'd become my cot in reality and marry Blanche," he thinks, keeping a bit in the rear so as not to hamper them with his society too much.

"I want to see you to-morrow afternoon; meet me here," Sir Lynn whispers, eagerly.

"Do not refuse. Will you come at four o'clock?"

"Yes," she stammers, "I will come; but it's wrong to ask such a thing."

"You have promised; you cannot take it back now," he answers, gravely.

"You are not very punctual. I began to get

anxious," Sir Lynn says, advancing to meet her the next afternoon.

"I was nearly breaking my rash promise," she returns, panting and flushed with running. "If mamma knew I had been so bold she would never forgive me."

"Am I so very dangerous?" he replies, tenderly. "Are you really afraid of me?"

"No," this fearlessly; "I fear only my own disobedience."

"I am the cause of it; on me must rest the blame if we should be found out. Have you guessed the errand I have come here for?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," she returns. "Perhaps you are in some trouble, and wish me to sympathise with you."

He regards her steadfastly, while the wanton spring wind blows her curls in wavelets across her forehead.

"I'll admit I do desire sympathy, and at your hands. The fact is, my little Maybud, you are craved with love. You are the one sweet poem of my life, the one jewel I covet. Will you make me blest, and be my wife?"

"I am not big or grown up enough to be a wife, Sir Lynn!" she replies, in a flutter of nervous agitation. "Besides, they would all disdain me if I was so mean as to listen to such a proposal."

"Why, in Heaven's name, should your people act thus because I love you?" he asks, gravely. "I have loved you from the first moment I saw your face; you are to me the one earthly treasure that would turn a conventional world into a paradise. To be near you is bliss and rapture. Little Maybud, you can never dream how you have twined yourself round my heart, or you would requite my love with a feeling as tender, if not so ardent as mine."

"I like you better than anyone in all the world except Hal," she says, softly; "but if I were to promise you I would marry you mamma and Blanche would cast me off with scorn and hatred—indeed they would."

"Why?" he asks, in perplexed surprise.

"Well, you see, we all thought—that is, oh, dear me! how silly I am," (getting awfully confused) "that you liked Blanche! Mamma and papa thought so, and—so did I!"

"What an absurd error! I am sure I never acted in any way to cause such a mistake. A man would indeed be a villain who would act so shameless a part!"

"Then you really did not care very much for Blanche?" she wheedles.

"I admire and esteem your charming sister immensely; but I love you with an undying passion," going on passionately. "If you only like me as you say I will make you love me when you are my own. No man could love as I do without inspiring some return. Look at me, and tell me if my heart is not abiding in my eyes! Oh, my darling! If you could only know how I have craved for your sweet presence, and the dreary, lonesome hours when we are apart, you would whisper one kind word to make me happy, and send me back to my lonely home in peace. Come," this entreatingly, "put me out of my misery!"

"I tell you I do like you, dearly," she hastens to say reassuringly. "Only you see they all call me a child at home, and you are so old and wise. I don't mean that you are really old" (this as she notices him flinch at her words). "I mean you are so nice and clever, while I am a regular dunce, besides being terribly hoydenish."

"You are perfection in my eyes, Maybud. I am bound to admit I am some years older than you, but that should not be the cause of your keeping me in suspense; uncertainty is maddening, especially when I know I could make you so happy."

"May I have Hal, and mamma and Titmouse to stay with me as often as I please?"

"As often as you please; you will be queen at Myron Court. I shall be your faithful, loyal subject, and we will go abroad and explore every place worth looking at on our honeymoon." Here he passes his arm round her tiny waist, while his voice sinks into a whisper, as he gazes entranced with ardent love at the piquant face of the one earthly idol his heart has set up to worship.

She shrinks with maidenly coyness from his

too ardent embrace, and her face becomes dyed with carnation hues, her little hands tremble within his at the force of his passion; then he places his hand under her chin, and raises her face near to his closer—closer; his lips meet hers in one long, delicious kiss, the first one of the nature that has ever pressed her innocent ones.

It is too much for the child-like nature, whose soul is stirred beyond even her own knowledge or control; and frightened and sobbing, she lies in his arms scarcely conscious of anything except a sense of shame and fear.

"What have I done, my pet!" he says anxiously. "I have frightened you; I was too rough and have offended you. I will not kiss you again till you give me permission."

"I am faint, and oh! so frightened," she gasps, raising her tear-bedewed face abashed, and glancing at him furtively. "How can I break this wonderful news to them all at home?"

"I will take you home, and make a clean breast of it at once."

"Oh no! please do not, for my sake. Give me time to think; it is all so sudden, and I dread their reproaches."

"Then we will leave it till to-morrow, and I shall come and claim you as my own sweet bride. It may surprise them, but it will soon be a recognised fact, and I fancy they will not refuse me my boon. Am I too presumptuous, sweet one?"

"No, you are very nice! Hal doats on you." "I wish you would," she laughs, squeezing her fingers and kissing them passionately.

"You will tell them all about how you have cared for me!"

"How you have bewitched me and stolen my heart, and how naughty and tantalising you have acted towards your liege lord."

"You are not that yet," she says demurely.

"Maybud, I have been your liege lord from the first moment I made up my mind to win you. I took you by storm, too, you will admit."

The lodge-gates are now visible, reminding them their time is up—a time of exquisite bliss to the Baronet, who catches the fragile girl in an impassioned embrace, pressing one long mad kiss on the quivering lips before he releases her.

Away she flies, hot, flushed, and trembling, feeling that last kiss has sealed her fate, yet dreading the morrow, when the startling truth would be revealed.

How they will scorn me when they hear I have taken poor Blanche's lover away. What a wicked girl I must be!" she thinks, as she creeps upstairs on tip-toe to lave her face from the tear stains, and cool its fever before presenting herself downstairs, to the quick eyes of Blanche and Hal.

As the hour approaches, the following morning, for the arrival of Sir Lynn, she gets faint and sick, and devoutly wishes yesterday could be blotted out of her life.

"Oh! here he is!" she gasps, hysterically, as at about two o'clock the Baronet rides up to the door on his favourite hunter, looking handsomer than ever, his face beaming with good humour and frank, happy smiles.

A numbed sensation creeps over her, the blood rushes to her temples, then recedes swiftly as she hears the drawing-room door close upon the visitor; then she locks her door, and crouches down in very terror.

Oh! the interminable length of time it seems before she hears her mother knocking at her door and asking to be let in.

"Open the door, Vetah, directly," Mrs. Rydon says, rather sharply.

It is a piteous, woe-begone little face which meets her surprised mother.

"Vetah, my child, you have sadly disappointed me. I never would have believed you capable of deceit. I thought you the incarnation of innocence and candour."

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" she cries, passionately. "I am not so wicked as you think. I never knew he cared for me till yesterday. I thought he liked me a little, as a gentleman might like a girl who is a little merry."

"But you must have met him before yesterday, surely!"

"Indeed I never have," she answers, earnestly.

"I am sure I cannot understand why he loved me instead of Blanche. I am not a patch on her—am I, mamma?"

"I am afraid it will break her heart, poor darling!" Mrs. Rydon replies, leaving Vetah's query unanswered, for there is still a warm corner in her heart for this sweet, loving little maiden who, though lacking the stately elegance of her eldest daughter, is very precious and winsome in her eyes.

Yet all the same, she thinks it advisable to show a little coldness, and continues,—

"It is very hard upon Blanche, for she insists upon it that you have been indiscreet, and led Sir Lynn on."

"Shall I give him up, mamma?" she cries, disconsolately; "would that comfort you all! Only tell me, and I will obey."

"Certainly not, child," her mother cries, aghast at the very idea of losing this eligible son-in-law; "the only thing is the cross-purposes that perplexes me, and the grief of poor Blanche."

"She surely doesn't care for a man who prefers another!" Vetah returns. "I should feel ashamed to give a second thought to anyone who treated me indifferently."

"You are my bonny, high-spirited bairn," her mother says, fondly folding her to her bosom and caressing the soft rings of hair tenderly. "If I have spoken too harshly I did not really mean it; it was all so amazing to me at first." Warm, motherly kisses, comforting in their love, bring the smiles back into the wistful face. "I fancy I could have given Blanche with less pain than my wild little Vetah," she says, fondly.

That evening the dinner-table is not graced by Blanche, who has hers sent up to her room.

Vetah looks awfully awkward and guilty, and takes an opportunity when her mother leaves the table to visit the absentee, and finds her reclining on her couch with a fan and smelling-bottle, her cheeks very pale, her eyes showing evidence of recent tears.

On Vetah making her appearance her sister says, haughtily,—

"Please do not intrude upon my privacy, Vetah. I am suffering intensely with a horrible headache, and the base deceit of one who I always was foolish enough to think was honest and true."

"I wouldn't have taken him from you for worlds, only he assured me there was no ground for believing he cared for anyone but me. It makes me feel quite wretched to see you so miserable."

"Kindly withdraw, and give your pity where it is required," Blanche replies, bitterly.

"Won't you kiss and make it up!" she pleads, humbly.

"No! I tell you the wound is too fresh! Go! and let me try to forget the whole miserable business!"

Very crestfallen is Vetah as she creeps away, thoroughly imbued with one idea—that she has behaved very cruelly and heartlessly.

Her father neither reproves nor congratulates, but observes a tacit silence on the subject; so she goes in search of her playmate Hal, whom she finds busily engaged digging for worms in the strawberry-bed for his next day's fishing.

"What on earth are you about!" she says, wonderingly.

"Getting my tackle ready for sport in Sir Lynn's waters. Get away, you clumsy thing you! Why, you'll kill all my worms!"

"Your worms!" she screeches, with a shudder. "Oh! you nasty boy! how can you dabble with such horrid things!"

"Don't be such a goose! Why, if you were a nice hungry roach or dace, you would gobble one down and fancy it a real dainty titbit!" he says, coolly.

"I shall be sick in a minute, Hal, if you talk so nastily, just as I want you to speak about the fine times we shall have when—I am mistress of the Court," her voice faltering at the term mistress.

"What a jolly little Lady Myron you will make! Won't I just have a lark! I know he is a regular trump."

"He told me, Hal, dear, that you could come

and stay as long as you liked!" she says, gleefully, stooping down to hug him.

"What a swell you will be! Oh! I shall be as proud as a peacock, and tell all the fellows at Eton how I can ride, and fish, and shoot, and what a grand place you've got. Won't they be jealous?"

"I mean to get you a gun and a dog for your own self, and a horse, and as for pocket-money, why, you shall have sovereigns instead of half-crowns."

"Why it sounds like some fairy tale, Vetah!" he says, giving vent to a war-whoop to relieve himself. "I'm awfully glad he liked you better than Blanche! She wouldn't have had me with her; she would have given me a wide berth. She calls boys necessary evils, and cubs, and louts. I'm glad she's served out!"

"It is unkind to speak like that," she says, reprovingly. "Blanche has never been unkind to either you or me; please do not discuss her."

"Oh! I don't mean any offence," he returns, sheepishly, gathering up his box of worms with tender care.

She slips her hand into his, and away they trudge together into the house, as guileless and wild a pair of children as ever chased a gaudy butterfly!

CHAPTER IV.

It is Vetah's bridal morn, and a real bridal one it is. The September sun is warm and golden in its splendour; the flowers are waving gently in the balmy breeze, the trees rustle musically, while the birds carol their loudest, as if they knew their favourite who fed them in the bitter winter is to become a bride, and they must unite their voices in thanksgiving.

The little church on the hill is gay with countless flowers, steeping the warm atmosphere with delightful odours; an expectant crowd has wedged itself in every corner to get a view of the bridal procession.

The march from *Athalie* peals out sonorous and grand, as Vetah passes down to the altar, led by her father, and followed closely by a train of pretty girls, whose radiant smiles and ravishing gowns make all the young men's hearts go pit-a-pat, while the ladies nudge each other, and gaze in silent admiration.

Jewels, priceless ones, crown the little brown curly head of the bride, and flash their soft lights on her arms and neck; the famous Myron family diamonds, a dagger of pearls and brilliant fasten the train on her shoulder.

But her grandeur sits lightly on her young head, for her mind is absorbed by the solemnity of the whole scene, and she realises, for the first time since her betrothal, the serious step she is about to take.

Pearly tears spring into her eyes as her mother presses forward after the ceremony, and folds her in her arms, to kiss her as only a mother can; then all is a kind of hazy dream, as she finds herself being led back to the carriage by her husband, the organ thundering forth the "Wedding March," and Hal, as he sees his playmate thrust out of his sight, looking as if he could weep with jealousy.

"Poor Hal," she falters, as the carriage dashes through the crowd. "I never saw him look so sad."

"Mine at last, mine alone!" her husband says ecstatically, "poor Hal has basked in your sunny presence enough, it is my turn now; Victory is mine."

She lays her head in its shimmering lace shyly on his breast, and he sits drinking in the entrancing picture, trying to fix it on his memory till time is no more for him.

"If a time should ever come, my pet, when any little coldness or misunderstanding should arise between us, remind me of this blissful moment when, with your dear head on my breast, I now am gazing at the dearest treasure earth contains for me. I vow the memory of it will chase away the darkest anger. Will you grant my wish, sweetheart, on this the happiest day of my existence?"

"Yes," she murmurs, tremulously; "but oh, Lynn! it seems all a dream. Is it really true? Am I your—your wife?"

"Yes, Lady Myron," he replies, proudly; "you are my wife, and the fairest dame that ever set foot in Myron Court. I mean to have your portrait taken without delay in this pretty frock and then our sons and daughters" (this audaciously) "shall see how lovely their mother was on her wedding morn!"

A troop of butterflies of fashion await them as Sir Lynn leads her up the steps. Blanche, looking as fair as a lily in a becoming dress, receives her and kisses her, to show all is pardoned and forgotten.

Then Hal pushes forward, and, regardless of Vetah's gorgeous array, hugs her like a young bear and whispers,—

"You look stunning, you do! When I marry I shall have a bride just like you, dress and all!"

They all laugh at his boyish simplicity, causing his face to get as red as a peony.

When the bride and bridegroom start for their honeymoon tears mingle with the smiles on many faces, and Hal betakes himself to an old spider-haunted arbour; and there, unseen, fights out his agony of saying good-bye alone, and, sobbing bitterly, walls forth,—

"I never thought it would be so hard to say it. I could almost hate that fellow Lynn. If I was a man I'd fight him; he'd no right to take her away from us."

And thus ended Vetah's wedding day—brightness and shadow, smiles and tears—showing how incomplete is all earthly pleasure or pageant—how futile our attempts to perfect anything conceived by mortal minds. Even the flowers are commencing to droop, that decked the nuptial breakfast; and the wreath of orange-blossoms lies neglected on the little white bed that Vetah would never sleep in again, just as she had cast it off in her haste to be dressed for her journey. Its reign is short-lived, and now it is even forsaken and forgotten.

CHAPTER V.

"WHAT is my wife puzzling her pretty head about?" Sir Lynn says, affectionately, about two months after their marriage, as seated in their home at Myron Court she tilts her chair to and fro abstractedly, a small pucker on her forehead, as if in some troubled thought.

"Lynn," she falters, nervously, "I have been wondering if you ever loved anyone as much as you do me!"

"What on earth has put such notions into your head?" he says, almost harshly.

"Do not be cross, dear," she pleads; "you might tell me some of your love romances."

"I never knew what real love meant," he returns, a shade of impatience crossing his face.

"But a love of some sort you felt, as you place a stress on real love. Well, tell me about that love."

"I wish you would not talk such nonsense, Vetah," he says, humbly.

"Is love nonsense, then? Why, I thought you said heaven was love!" she protests.

"Heaven is where you are when you don't tease me. Love and I were strangers till I saw your witching face, be assured of that. Of course all men have some imitation of the grand passion when they are fledglings; it is almost as common as measles, only more dangerous, if they are not strong enough to throw off the disease."

"You speak very feelingly, Lynn," she says, mischievously.

"I only speak as a man would who has passed through the fire."

"Then you have loved someone else, and I was right! It must be funny to love twice! Perhaps I shall. Who knows?"

He shivers and draws her almost fiercely to him, as if he would defy such awful words to come true.

"What in the name of all that is sacred put such detestable ideas into your mind? Do you wish to drive me frantic?" he asks, hoarsely. "Do you know what horrible import those words convey! Oh! my love! my girl-wife! you are

mine—mine alone. No living man shall tear you from me; it would kill me now to lose you. You will never desert me, will you?"

Large beads of perspiration stand on his brow, and his face is deadly in the pallor as he holds her closer and closer to him, as if he fears she will be snatched from his arms.

"I; no, Lynn, dear!" she answers falteringly, trembling with the force of his emotion and strange looks. "It was only caprice, a girl's foolish curiosity, that made me ask you such silly questions. I always was a little goose."

"Such conversation pains me, dear one! It probes me to the quick. Such a nature as mine is like the sea, unfathomable in its depths for good or evil when aroused."

She cannot follow him in his explanation. She is too young and simple to gauge his love for her or its intensity.

"You will kiss me a pardon!" she coaxes, nestling up to him, and placing her tempting mouth close to his.

"Rest assured, darling wife, no woman ever crept into my heart except you," he whispers tenderly, kissing the dewy lips over and over again.

The domestic breeze is finished; together they walk into the grounds to give orders to the head-gardener about the planting of a roseray in honour of the bride's coming home.

"What a fairy-like little leddy she is," mutters that worthy, as he watches his new mistress coming towards him, a veritable Hebe in her soft, pearly, morning gown floating in the wind.

He stands twirling his cap nervously in his huge, rust-coloured hands, lost for fitting speech to address her now that he is at last actually close to her.

"Lady Myron has come herself to see you about the roseray, Coleman," his master says, encouragingly, noticing the nervousness of the man.

"I am sure I am highly honoured, my leddy," he blurts out, confusedly. "I would have furbished myself up if I had but known you had been doing me such an honour. I hope you will excuse me, my leddy," bowing for about the twentieth time.

"I am quite content with you as you are, Coleman," she observes, sweetly. "It is impossible to be spick-and-span when one is gardening. I know, because I have done a lot myself, and love it dearly. Will you permit me to invade your territory and do a little sometimes? I promise to obey instructions."

His face beams with gratified pride, and he answers eagerly,—

"Every greenhouse shall open its doors in less than a trice, my leddy, and I and my men be your willing, faithful servants."

"Lor! bless you, if you could have seen her smile at me, it would have made your heart go bump, it would," he relates to cook that evening down in the cosy corner by the huge fireplace, where he is imbibing a piping hot glass of Scotch whisky.

"Lor, my good man, you'll go crazed, you will," she laughs, a little jealously, "just because our lady spoke civilly. I am sure her sweet face couldn't help smiling, so you needn't be so proud. Why, Eliza says she patted her on the cheek and called her a nice girl; and to-morrow I shall wait on my lady for the orders for dinner, and I'll bet you a wager she'll like me, and say something pretty."

"Oh! you needn't be so uppity, Mistress Barton, and give yourself airs because you come last in the field."

Barton, having a sneaking regard for the man of flowers and fruit, and the little passage-of-arms by brewing another steaming glass of grog, which brings the cheery smiles back to his ruddy face, and smirks of a coquetish nature from plump Mrs. Barton.

The prophecy came true Sir Lynn predicted when he said that Vetah would be queen of Myron Court; for she was not only queen of her lovely home, but reigned in the hearts of every member, from the lowliest to the highest, causing many squabbles among them, if they thought she dispensed her smiles more freely to one than another.

Right royal hospitality is kept up at Christmas

—the first one spent by the Baronet under his ancestral roof for many years—and he is determined to celebrate it by filling it from the cellars to the roof with guests in honour of its sweet young mistress.

Hal's war-whoop rings out sharp and piercing through the rooms and staircases, and a small dormitory crammed with things his heart loveth—guns, fishing tackle of every conceivable kind—while Titmouse is also permitted to make one of the party, to the boy's infinite delight.

Vetah flits about from room to room to see that everything is trim and cosy for this influx of visitors; holly and mistletoe hung by her own fair hands adorn every nook and corner, and blazing fires roar and splutter up the wide, old-fashioned chimneys.

"Is this not lovely!" she pants, breathlessly, flying down the stairs three at a time, loaded with boxes of bon-bons.

"No, emphatically no," he answers, swiftly. "It is anything but lovely to see you fatiguing yourself with these" (taking the parcels out of her arms). "Why do you not call one of the women, child?"

"I like to be busy, Lynn, dear!" she laughs. "Oh! this darling Christmas! I shall never forget it. I used to play at being a lady, and walk about our drawing-room as proud as a peacock, never dreaming I should be one in reality; this with a comical little strut and twirl that brings a smile into her husband's face as he murmurs—

"My little child-wife, I pray that Heaven may spare you to me fresh and pure, untouched by the blasts of winter, as you are now."

Blanche is among the first batch of guests who arrive; she is wreathed in her most fascinating smiles, for she has coaxed out of her father a very heavy cheque, which has been expended in the freshest and newest styles of gowns.

"What a truly grand old place this is, Vetah!" she remarks, admiringly; "really you ought to feel very happy!"

"So I do, dear, very happy; but I fancy Lynn has a little to do with it," she roughly.

"Do you mean to tell me you would feel the same towards him if he took you to some out-of-the-way hole?"

"I did not marry Myron Court, Blanche," she observes; "though I admit I dearly love every stick and stone; but there, that is because it is Lynn's. Why, his cradle is in the nursery—such a funny old thing!"

"What a romantic child it is still. I thought you would have become wiser by now," Blanche returns, half pityingly; "but there, you always were very childish."

"Suppose we talk about the people who are coming to stay [with us]," Vetah interposes. "You surely have some curiosity to hear their names?"

"Of course; I am dying to hear who they are, and their pedigree and income," she laughs.

"Well, there is, first and foremost, Lord Charles Dynivor, a bachelor, and Sir Robert Channey. Those are the ones who rejoice in a haughty to their names; two or three especial old chums of Lynn's, and a regular crowd of pretty matrons and girls; doest thou like the picture?"

"It will no doubt prove a merry party," she replies, animatedly; "and I think I shall enjoy myself immensely. I have come well provided with no end of the prettiest things in millinery I could get."

"That reminds me I have something for you, Blanche, dear," Vetah says, in a transport of glee, going to a cabinet, and taking a case and flinging it into her sister's lap.

"What is it?" Blanche says, in surprise.

"Your Christmas gift—the first real one I have ever given you," this with a sparkle of pride and joy in her pretty eyes, as she watches her sister unclasp the case.

"Why, they are priceless!" Blanche cries, in amazement.

"They are for you, dear, handsome old love of a sister," she replies, falling on her knees at her feet, and purring up her lips for a kiss. "It is my peace-offering, dear!" this softly. "Let me place them round your neck and arms, just to

see how grand you will look by-and-by when you queen it downstairs!"

The gift so magnificent, and so sweetly given, softens the nature of Blanche towards this loving little sister; and in a burst of genuine gratitude she returns her kiss with another equally affectionate, and the feud between the pair is forgiven and forgotten.

Vetah is quite proud of her later on, when, clad in some frosted gown of delicate whiteness, adorned with sprays of silver thistles and holly berries, she floats in and captivates all the men at once, who make up their mind to be the lucky individual to take her into dinner.

Lord Charles Dynivor is the fortunate one, much to the disgust of the longing ones, who glare fiercely at their more fortunate rival. Before the evening is well on his lordship falls desperately in love, much to the satisfaction of Vetah and Blanche, for he is a very great favourite of hers and her husband's.

"You have made a complete conquest, Blanche! I never saw a fellow so smitten, so fairly gone in my life," laughs her brother-in-law, as she bids him good-night. "He's a capital match, too—ten thousand a year rent-roll, I know."

"He is very nice," she replies, smiling sweetly, and kissing Vetah with the frank, sisterly warmth of old.

"Well, now that we are alone, Lynn, for the first time to-night, you might tell me how I looked and acted as hostess!"

He gazes with a world of tender love and admiration on the daintily gowned figure, the rich silk clinging in waves around her slight form, and the Myron diamonds gleaming in her hair, on her arms and neck; but not eclipsing the dancing light in her starry eyes, that are shining doubly bright with excitement.

"You were the queen of the evening, my pet. Why, all the men were enchanted with you! General Maxwell declares you will be the beauty of the coming season. Didn't I exult in the thought that no one could steal my Maybud away from me!" he says, rapturously, bending down and kissing her ardently.

"Blanche was the queen, dear Lynn; she looked positively lovely to me."

"So she did; but, you see, there is a charm, a nameless, alluring something about my little wife which to most men is more enthralling even than set features and stately grace."

"So long as I am always lovely in your eyes, Lynn, I am satisfied," she replies, softly, gathering up her trailing skirts, and hastening to her room while he enjoys a quiet cigar, as is his usual custom.

A ball flashes the festivities at the Court, and in the dim, half-lit conservatory Lord Dynivor declares his love to Blanche. There is a subtle fragrance everywhere, and the splash of a fountain mingles with the strains of the band.

She listens to his impassioned words with averted face, on which blushes and triumph mingle. A glittering ring is slipped on her finger, and a betrothal kiss seals the rest.

Flushed and excited she flies to Vetah, who is pulling on a second pair of gloves up in her dressing-room.

"I can see what has happened!" Vetah exclaims. "Lord Dynivor has proposed and been accepted. I am so glad, dear, and wish you all the happiness in the world; he is a charming man!"

"I knew you would be pleased, Vetah. Oh! dear sis! I am so happy, and I love him so much;" she falters, clinging round Vetah's neck, and hiding her face lest she should see the tears and blushes that will not be repressed.

"Then you really like him better than you did, Lynn?" Vetah observes simply.

"I liked him, but I love Charles," she replies earnestly; "and only fancy, we are both to be presented next season together; Lady Charles Dynivor on her marriage—Lady Lynn Myron! Doesn't it sound nice!" smiling through her tears.

"Yes, it seems unreal to me. I shall pinch myself to see if it isn't all a dream," buttoning the fourteenth button, "or a Christmas story."

"A very substantial reality, I think, since you have to make haste downstairs. Lynn was

inquiring of everybody where you were, so you had better hurry down while I attend to this tiresome hot face of mine."

In the bridal dress Vetah wore a few months back she queneed it at her first ball.

"Where have you been, Maybud?" her husband whispers anxiously, as she once more joins her guests.

"I have been making myself presentable, see!" holding up her clean-gloved hands. "Coats have a habit which I am sure is very ungallant, of soiling our poor gloves dreadfully."

"I want you to give me the next dance," he says, "if you are not engaged. I know it is thought bad form to dance twice with one's wife, but this is our first Christmas in our own home, and your first ball."

"I cannot see why we shouldn't dance every dance in the programme if we like, Lynn!" she says innocently. "I am sure it would be lovely!"

The band commences a delightful waltz; he clasps the little snowy satin figure's waist, and soon they are whirling in dreamy bliss, her feet scarcely touching the waxen floor.

As he leads her into the refreshment room he whispers,—

"I wish, Maybud, we could carry out what you said just now. I cannot endure seeing other fellow's arms round your waist. I feel a kind of shudder."

"I'll sit out the other dances if you like," she answers, unconcernedly.

"No, my pet, it would look peculiar. I must get accustomed to it; no doubt I shall in time;" this with a grim smile.

But, nevertheless, Sir Lynn makes up his mind not to have many balls when he retires to his chamber that night, or, rather, early morning.

"It does not seem the thing, say what you like, for men to hold the one dearest treasure of his life—his wife—in their arms, and drink in the sweetness of her face. Hang it all, I'd start a fashion that all married women should only dance with their husbands if I were the Prince of Wales!"

Vetah, tired out with her revels, lies beside him in a soft, child-like sleep, perfectly ignorant of the battle between love and jealousy her husband is fighting out with himself.

He exults secretly when he bids the last guest good-bye, and they settle down once more to their old peaceful life. Vetah is too precious to him to be permitted to scatter her smiles broadcast. He feels like a miser who likes to gaze on his gold alone; and is joyless even when Hal, laden with hampers of goodies is packed off to Eton, and feels quite ill-tempered when he sees Vetah's eyes full of tears at parting with her playmate.

"You will quite spoil the boy," he says, grumpily. "He will get dissatisfied at school, my love!"

She does not answer, but gulps down her tears, and the subject is dropped. The Baronet is now supremely happy at last.

CHAPTER VI.

SPRING is come again, bringing with it a pink and white sheet of blossom that resembles tinted snow; the golden primrose peeps forth from its mossy couch; while the perfume of violets is everywhere.

In a bright sunny room is Vetah, sitting here, there, and everywhere, attended by Eliza, her favourite maid.

"Lor, my lady, the cradle looks nothing but a bower of lace, it does!" exclaims the maid, admiringly.

"You really think it looks pretty? I am so glad," she says, clapping her hands. "You see, Sir Lynn was cradled in it. I wonder how it was trimmed!"

"I heard the housekeeper say that old Mrs. Toogood said it was blue velvet and gold fringe, my lady."

"How grand!" replies her mistress; "he must have looked a darling!"

"He did, my lady, so they say. My lord's mamma, they do say, couldn't bear him out of her sight lest someone should steal him."

A fairy-like basket, with gold-backed brushes,

soft as silk, and other trifles, lie beside a low easy chair, and there, piled up in a huge wardrobe, are the dainty little garments, lawn and lace, all marked with the Myron crest.

"This will be my favourite room; it is the pleasantest in the house. Look, Eliza; there are the hills and the sea in the distance, and all the prettiest flowers close at hand. Could baby eyes look out upon a brighter picture?" she said animatedly.

"No, my lady, it is splendid!" echoes Eliza, earnestly.

"I will go down now and fetch Lynn," she thinks. "He will be pleased to see his dear old room so transformed and pretty."

Very softly she descends the staircase to the library, where she knows her husband is looking over his quarterly accounts.

A large screen shuts off the draught at the door, voices in loud altercation—one a stranger's—arrest her entrance.

She stands as though in a kind of dreamy stupor, spellbound, afraid to fly or enter; then some words are spoken that seem to sear her brain, to petrify the blood, as it rushes wildly to her heart.

"Great Heaven!" she murmurs, "save me," feeling, but trying to support herself against the screen. "Am I mad or is this some horrible nightmare? Oh! I shall suffocate—I shall die!"

There is a piercing shriek, shrill and heart-rending, followed by the sudden appearance of Vetch, who staggers into the room to fall at her husband's feet.

"Say it is false! Oh, Lynn! say it is false!" she gasps out at last.

"If I could strangle you I would, you fiend!" he hisses out savagely to a woman who stands looking on with baleful triumph in her vicious face.

"So this is the girl who you thought to put in my child's place!" she says, vengefully. "Truly a pretty spectacle!"

"Begone! wretched murderess! lest I lose my manhood and do you some fearful mischief."

"It is very hard to find your lawful wife cropping up at such a time, when you thought all was so comfortably settled, and number two installed in her home," she sneers.

"Tell me, woman, if you have a spark of human feeling, if your awful words are true, and if you are the mother-of-of his wife!" Vetch asks, hoarsely, raising herself up with difficulty, and holding out her hands as if to ward off a deadly blow.

"Yes!" the woman answers, firmly.

"Lynn! Lynn! then what am I?" she moans, piteously. "What will become of our child?"

The bonny head droops, the slight form aways forward to be caught in Sir Lynn's arms.

"Monster, go! You have killed my wife!" he roars in frenzied rage.

"Your m—," she retorts, mockingly, but the terrible epithet is never finished; for the Baronet, having placed his lovely burden on a couch, thrusts the woman out into the lobby and bangs the door upon her.

CHAPTER VII.

A WEEK passes by, an eternity of torture to Sir Lynn, who, like some unquiet spirit, paces from morning to night outside Vetch's apartment.

At last the summons comes, but it finds him trembling like a reed in a wintry blast; his eyes are dim and sunken, the result of nightly vigils and remorseful agony.

"Vetch!" he says, hollowly, approaching her couch, where pale and listless she lies, with eyes laden with reproachful anguish, though she tries hard to stifle it from his observation, "will you not say something to me? Heaven knows what torture I have passed through, being denied even the one consolation of seeing my poor suffering angel!"

"I have been ill," she says, brokenly, a sob in

her voice, while her poor lips quiver; "and they wouldn't let me see anybody; all was dark and awful!" this with a shudder.

He kneels by her side and takes one of her hands—such tiny snowy things they look—and a scalding tear splashes down on them which she wipes off with her cheek caressingly.

"My love! my little martyred wife!" he cries, bursting into a passion of tears, "may Heaven bless you for your sweet sympathy!"

"Do I comfort you, Lynn?" she says, tenderly.

"Yes, it is balm to my weary soul to know you pity me and believe me not so vile as I thought you would."

"I would stake my life upon your honour; you have been cruelly deceived. Is it not so, Lynn?"

"Yes, my love, you have arrived at the truth. My wretched past I thought was buried in the grave with one of the most infamous, vilest of her sex that ever took the shape of woman to lure a man to destruction."

"Poor, persecuted Lynn!" she sighs, a world of infinite tenderness in her voice; "we must be brave to meet our new life unflinchingly."

"You mean part," he groans, his whole frame shaking with intense agony at the awful prospect of parting from one whose presence is unutterable bliss.

"Yes, Lynn, and you will help me to bear our cross," clasping his hands tightly to her bosom; "be my strength. I am only a poor little reed."

"Vetch!" he cries, wrought to desperation, a fearful temptation seizing him; "my life, my love, doubly hallowed to me now by this terrible trial, let us fly from England, and in our new life bury this horrible dark secret in our own hearts. You are bound to me by ties firmer than any woven by the laws of our Church."

"It cannot be, Lynn," she answers, shrinking from him with alarm in her brown eyes.

"Death—ah! even a thousand deaths would be preferable," he falters, despairingly. "Oh, my love—my little Maybud! it should not be at your hands I should find my living grave. Have some pity on me—give me the opportunity of atoning for the deep wrong I have unwittingly done you."

"I dare not listen to you, Lynn, if you persist in tempting me to do that which would make me so base, so sinful, that I could never look into the eyes of my dear mother again!"

He clasps her passionately to him, and gazes at the wan, young face so full of pain and suffering, yet stamped with a holy innocence, giving it a radiance not born of earth. It makes him feel abashed at the proposition, wrung from his unthinking, passionate nature.

"You have conquered," he says, after a pause. "I am wrong, you are right. I will go, though it may tear my heart-strings."

"Lynn, my love, my love!" she cries; "you are now my own noble Lynn, dearer to me than in the hour I—I—your—;" but here the trembling lips are unable to complete the word, and her face crimsoned at the shame of it all.

"My honoured wife, before Heaven," he adds, solemnly, "and man, too—for our secret must never be revealed—I will bribe this wretched creature, who, for her own fell purposes of revenge has led me to believe she was dead, never to cross your path. She has her price—gold to her god; she shall have it and to spare."

"Where will you go?" she inquires, gravely.

"Anywhere," he answers, recklessly; "become a wanderer seeking rest but finding none."

"Seeking rest and peace at the hands of the Great Comforter, whom we have knelt together and prayed to in the old days, and always found kind and merciful," she interposes, a seraphic smile illumining her face.

"Will you pray for me?" he says, his voice thick with tears.

(Continued on page 137)

THE sacred book of the Sikhs, now in the possession of the Marquis of Dufferin, is only about half the size of a postage-stamp.

MY SWEETHEART.

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CHAPTER LX.

GREGOR THORPE could endure no more. With a cry that resounded through the house, he sprang before Mildred and confronted her.

"You—you must answer me this question on your word of honour," he cried. "As you hope for mercy in heaven, and the forgiveness of man on earth, tell me, Mildred, did you fire that fatal shot?"

She looked at him in bewilderment.

"I do not understand you," she said, with simple dignity.

"Who fired the shot that sent Paula to her death?" he cried, hoarsely, the veins standing out like whipcords on his forehead, and great beads of perspiration rolling down his bronzed cheeks.

The horror that came into the girl's face was engraven on it until the day she died.

She seemed to catch his words like one in a blank, awful dream, and they slowly pierced her brain; but with the first realisation of their import, the wildest, most piercing cry that ever fell from human lips issued from Mildred's, and she fell at his feet like one dead.

With trembling hands Gregor raised her.

"Nothing under Heaven could make me believe now in her guilt," cried Mrs. Morris. "You see that the news of her sister's death from the bullet-wound has almost cost the girl her life."

There was no dissembling in her awful sorrow and agony.

"I believe with you, despite all appearances to the contrary, that Mildred is indeed innocent," he responded.

"And believing this, we must never let her know that we suspected her, for it would kill her," said Mrs. Morris.

"You are right," returned Gregor, huskily.

No words can depict the wild grief of Mildred when she returned to consciousness again, and realised the terrible grief that had fallen upon her so suddenly for Paula's loss. Both Mrs. Morris and Gregor were powerless to comfort her.

"Oh, Heaven help me! I know who did it—I am sure I know!" she wailed out, sharply.

There was no use withholding the truth about Dudley now, she told herself in agony.

And then the whole story came out—of Dudley's persecution of her hapless young sister because he had discovered her identity, and that it was he who had attacked Paula in her very boudoir just a few moments before the ceremony, while she was standing at the mirror in her bridal robes.

"You remember the hat and cloak. He had taken them off and had sat there coolly to exasperate the girl. I hustled him out. It must have been Dudley who crept round to the house again and fired the fatal shot at her. He threatened that she should never be your bride; that he would shoot her down dead at the very altar first. And, oh, Heaven be pitiful! he has kept his word. My darling lies cold in death, and he goes scot-free; and poor Mildred's intense grief was awful to behold."

"I see it all now," cried Gregor Thorpe, and he wondered that he had been so foolish as to suspect for one moment poor, noble Mildred.

Terrible as this revelation was to him, he told himself that his first duty was to comfort Mildred in their great mutual affliction.

How kind, how gentle he tried to be to her! But both kindness and gentleness were lost to her now, her heart was so torn with anguish over Paula's fate.

When Gregor left Mrs. Morris's cottage that evening, it was with entirely different emotions from those he had entertained in his bosom when he had entered it.

He immediately set to work to find the whereabouts of Pierce Dudley, and he felt enraged enough at himself that this solution to the terrible mystery had not occurred to him before.

Poor Mildred! Heavens! How mad he had

been to suspect her! What a noble girl she had been from beginning to end! And when he thought of all her sufferings, his heart reproached him bitterly; and all the way to his hotel his thoughts were full of her. Ah! how could he ever make up to her for the misery he had caused her, and the suspicions that he had entertained against her!

Even though an angel had cried out trumpet-tongued that she was guilty, he ought never to have believed it of her.

He should have been her true, firm friend, in adversity as well as in sunshine; and he thanked the fates from the bottom of his heart that Mildred did not know that he had suspected her. Surely that would have been the bitterest drop in her cup of anguish.

And as his thoughts turned towards Paula, a sort of horror crept over him that she, whom he had believed as guileless as an angel, had been capable of so horrible a fraud and deceit. She had not even told him that Mildred was her sister, but had led him to believe that they were entire strangers.

If there was anything in this world that Gregor Thorpe abhorred, it was hypocrisy in any form; and Paula, whom he had believed above reproach, had seemed a very angel to him.

His only thought had been that he was not worthy of so peerless a treasure.

Now his dream of her sweet, girlish innocence and truth lay shattered. He had adored her memory and had grieved over her as few men ever grieve over a dead love.

Now the scales as to Paula's great worth were falling slowly from his eyes, and he began to see Mildred in her true light.

His solitude was so great in regard to the condition of Mildred's grief and troubled mind that he found himself drawn irresistibly towards the cottage at an early hour that same evening.

Mrs. Morris came to the door to meet him.

"I am afraid it is all over with Mildred," she said, in a frightened voice. "She has sat up by the window ever since you left this afternoon, with her face buried in her hands. She has not spoken one word since. All our efforts have been futile. Perhaps you could awaken her to the realisation that she must face life."

"If you have failed to arouse her, it would be almost useless for me to attempt it," he said, with a heavy sigh.

Mrs. Morris motioned him into the room, however, and he entered alone and crossed over to where Mildred sat.

She did not hear his soft footsteps on the carpet.

"Mildred," he said, gently; but she was so engrossed with her own thoughts that she did not hear.

He looked at the dark, bowed head, and started as the words of an old song floated dimly through his mind:

"It is too late! Our lives henceforth must sever!
With thine mine own can hold a part no more;
It is too late, and from to-day, forever."

Gregor came a step nearer and whispered softly again:

"Mildred,"—and this time he laid a gentle hand on the dark, bowed, curly head—"let me comfort you in this your hour of greatest sorrow," he murmured. "Let me be your friend, your brother, for Paula's sake, if not for your own;" and as he uttered the words, he knelt playfully on the hassock at her feet.

His voice seemed to bring her back to the world, to unlock the icy blood standing so cold and chilly in her veins.

She roused herself with a mighty effort and looked at him and the pain in those dark, mournful eyes cut him to the heart like a knife.

"Let me comfort you, Mildred," he repeated, huskily. "Our sorrow is one. Let me be your sincerest friend in your hour of need."

The girl shuddered, and drew back from him with a look of alarm on her white sad face.

"Surely you do not refuse my overtures of friendship!" he said, huskily and appealingly, still kneeling before her.

"It cannot be," returned Mildred. "Leave

me to myself in my great sorrow. You cannot comfort me, Mr. Thorpe, my grief is beyond that."

He rose slowly and looked at her. Never had she seemed more noble, more beautiful to him than now.

"Can we not even be friends?" he asked in a low voice.

"It would be better not," she answered, simply.

"But, Mildred, your grief will drive you mad unless you have some strong arm to uphold you in this hour of affliction."

Her lips quivered.

"Heaven has given me strength to bear the deepest sorrows," she answered. "He knows why He afflicted me so cruelly. Surely I can bow under the rod."

Gregor Thorpe was at a loss for words. The entrance of Mrs. Morris cut short all further conversation between them.

"Thank Heaven! you have succeeded in arousing the poor child from the apathy into which she had fallen!" cried Mrs. Morris, taking Mildred in her arms and pillowing her head on her motherly shoulder. "You have saved her life!"

During the remainder of the time that Gregor stayed in the room Mildred sat with averted face.

"How she despises me now!" he cried to himself as he quitted the cottage. "How strange it seems to me that so noble a girl as Mildred could ever have loved me! Now [she will not even accord me her friendship." And she seemed to take new value in his eyes.

The next day and the next found him at the cottage; but Mildred would not see him, though he asked for her on both occasions.

But he never knew of the hours Mildred spent in her own room, crying out to herself that she must not give way to this great longing for Gregor Thorpe's friendship; for her own heart told her that it must never be, that those who had once been lovers could never be simply friends.

From friendship the step to love would be so easy, and she had guarded herself so valiantly against this for her peace of mind's sake.

CHAPTER LXI.

The days passed lonely enough to Paula. It almost seemed to her that life was no longer worth the living; her existence seemed to merge into one object, and that was to watch for Gregor Thorpe, as he passed down the street each morning, and watch for him to reappear again at night.

Did he grieve over her loss, she wondered, this fair-haired, handsome young lover who had loved her so well! Ah! how sorry she felt for him. Perhaps she had been wrong in doubting him, because of the few chance words she had heard uttered by Miss Dawes.

The more Paula thought over it, the more she became convinced that it was madness to immerse herself so completely from those who had loved her so well; but despite her conflicting thoughts, for two long months she remained in the silk factory.

It was no easy matter for Paula, who had of late been used to every luxury, to earn her bread by daily toil.

The girls in the factory were kind to her in their own way and after a fashion, but she made friends with no one save her room-mate, Jane Bolton.

"You are always so still, so quiet," remarked Jane to Paula one day; "you always seem in a sort of day-dream. One would almost fancy that you are in love. I have always heard that was the symptom. You are not interested in any of the young men the girls talk about. How is it; wouldn't you care for a lover?"

"No," returned Paula.

"I never believe a girl when she says that," returned Jane Bolton; "for it isn't in human nature. Whenever a handsome young man comes wooing, few young girls will say him nay, and besides, if we girls who have to work for a living don't marry while we are yet young enough,

Heaven only knows what will become of us when we get old. It will be work or die then. No one will want us when we commence to fade."

"You have to wait until the right one comes along," replied Paula.

"But supposing the right one, as you call it, never does come, what are you going to do then?" responded Jane.

"But he will come, sooner or later," returned Paula.

"I would never advise a girl to wait for such a one," replied Jane, "for I believe in the old saying, 'Sell while you can,' or in other words, 'Make your market while you may.' Perhaps," said she, suddenly, "you are hoping to find a rich young man because you are so pretty. I used to have day-dreams of that kind myself, until I found how impracticable they were. It's about one girl out of about a thousand that gets a rich fellow. Why, the rich and the poor never meet unless by some odd caprice of fate. They seek among those of their own class, among whom they are thrown in daily contact, for wives. No wonder the rich girls always capture them. Haven't they fine parlours to invite them to, and can't they invite them to fine dinners or carriage rides with their indulgent papas! and then, last but by no means least, haven't they fine silks and laces and grand clothes to wear! No wonder they can look so charming, for fine feathers make fine birds, you know. Poor girls have to count the pennies to pay their rent, while the grocer and the baker get all the rest of their earnings, and as to clothes, why, a new dress is a rarity we scarcely dare dream about. And then if a working-girl puts any of her scant earnings in furniture to make her best room look better, so that some young man who has come home with her once or twice can be invited in, why, if she doesn't succeed in getting him, if he drops off, there is no end to the hue and cry her folks raise, because she has put her money out for useless furniture, and it takes many a year to make up the loss. If the gods would give me any wish that I might ask, I'd say, 'Give me wealth,'" declared Jane, "for I would know that would buy everything in this world that my heart craved."

"It could not buy true and honest love," said Paula, looking wistfully out of the window, "nor change the fate Heaven intended for you."

"I used to believe in fate," said Jane; "but I don't any more. I find your fate is just what you make it. A friend of mine here," she continued—"you must know her—Lena Meadows is the girl I mean—is deeply in love with a young man who is awfully wealthy—at least so she says; but when no one is looking nowadays I often see tears in the girl's eyes. That shows me she has no hope, and has pinned her faith to a reed. I told her from the first: 'If the young man you are talking about is so rich, he will never marry a poor working-girl like you;' and she has not spoken to me from that day to this. I don't believe she will ever get him. I am going to watch and see."

Paula could not help but laugh at her companion's strange vagaries; but her heart was too full of her own thoughts to heed her words.

As the days wore on, a longing that changed the whole current of her life came to Paula, and that was to see Mildred once again. So strong grew the fever upon her that, despite the chilly rain that had set in, one afternoon Paula donned her long cloak and hood, and set out to Mrs. Morris's. She wondered if Mildred missed her.

It had been raining dreadfully all the long day through, and night had come on early. Still this did not deter Paula from her cherished plan of seeing Mildred before she slept again.

With hurrying feet Paula pursued her journey across the city, making her way toward Mrs. Morris's. At last she stood before the humble cottage. No one was near. She lifted the latch of the gate and entered noiselessly. As she crept up the pebbled walk she caught the sound of voices from within, and she knew it was Mildred's voice that she heard.

Paula made her way slowly to a vine-wreathed window at the side of the house. The light from the interior streamed out warm and cosy on the

web, coil ground, and the little shrinking figure out in the storm and the darkness. Pushing the clinging vines aside with her little, cold, trembling hand, Paula peeped in.

Yes, Mildred was there seated in a low willow rocker beside a glowing grate-fire, which threw rosy lights and shadows on her pale, sweet face and the sombre dress she wore; but that which held Paula's gaze as if in a spell was the tall figure of a young man who was leaning with careless, easy grace against the mantel and looking eagerly down into Mildred's half-averted face.

At the first glance Paula felt the blood pulse more quickly around her heart, for she recognised Gregor Thorpe, and the thought flashed through her mind that Gregor—her poor Gregor!—had come to Mildred for consolation in the great woe he was experiencing over her loss.

Surely she could not be blamed for bending her ear closer to the cold pane to hear what he might say—to hear him utter the words her heart was so hungry to hear—that he loved her and how lonely his life was without her.

How her heart craved to hear his musical voice uttering the words that meant so much to her; but the expression on Gregor's face rather startled her as he turned slowly toward Mildred. Surely there was no gnawing, hungering pain visible in his countenance. On the contrary, there was an eager smile on his mouthed lips.

"I can wait no longer for your answer, Mildred," she heard him say. "It must be now or never with me. I can stand the suspense no longer."

The next words that Paula heard almost cost her her reason.

"You must not refuse me, Mildred," he murmured. "The time has come when we must fully understand each other. I am called to America unexpectedly. I must go at once, and I cannot endure the thought of leaving you behind me. You must go with me as my wife."

"You must not speak of it, Gregor; I cannot bear the words," returned Mildred, in a very faint and tremulous voice. "What you ask can never be. I could not bear to wed one who had been poor Paula's lover. No, it can never be."

He turned his fair, handsome face away half impatiently.

"Do not use that argument any longer, Mildred," he said. "It is cruel—too cruel—to face the future without you. You loved me once, Mildred, and were my promised bride. Have you not some of the old love yet in your heart for me? Look up and tell me. Do not break my heart and your own by a mistaken sense of duty."

"But Paula!" murmured the girl, faintly.

"The past is past," he said. "You promised me [by a solemn compact never to refer to it again. We both loved her well, but she is no more, and—oh! Mildred, why will you force me to say it?—I have found out since that I never loved her with the deep adoration which I have given to you. This last love which has come to me—the hope of making you mine, Mildred—is the crowning hope of my life. I cannot take 'No' for an answer. I wonder that I could ever have chosen Paula in place of you, my queen. I think I must have been mad over the glamour of her beauty."

There was a crash outside, and Mildred started tremblingly to her feet, grasping at the back of her chair.

"What is that?" she cried, in affright. "Only the fury of the storm beating the boughs of the swaying trees against the pane," he replied; adding gently: "You are very nervous, my poor little Mildred."

She broke away from the clasp of his hands, retreating toward the door; but he followed her eagerly, and caught her in his firm, masterful grasp before she reached the threshold.

"Do not leave me like this," he cried; "it must not be. If you send me from you now, it shall be for ever. Think well, for two lives might be sacrificed by your refusal. Do not break my heart; I have had so much sorrow. Be my sweet, ministering angel—my comfort, my joy. You love me, Mildred, and you cannot deny it. Could you thrust me out of your life for ever, and look forward to the cold, dark future, when

we might meet no more! Oh, Mildred, could you do it?"

The girl was trembling like a leaf in the wind; her brain was in a whirl, and her heart beating tumultuously. She knew that every word he uttered was true—quite true—and if she sent from her the only man whom she had ever loved, her whole future would be wrecked, the sun would cease to shine for her, and the world would be a desert drear.

"Is it 'yes' or 'no,' Mildred?" he asked, with thrilling earnestness.

For one moment Mildred grew pale as death; then she answered with a little sob, so faintly he could scarcely catch it:

"It is yes, Gregor, if you really want me."

CHAPTER LXII.

"As Paula listened out in the cold and the darkness, and heard the thrilling words that broke from Gregor Thorpe's lips as he bent over Mildred, her heart seemed to break then and there with one great, awful throb.

Her little white hands loosened their hold on the rose branches, the whole world seemed to whirl all in one instant around her. With a little gasping cry which only the angels in heaven heard, Paula sank down unconscious upon the rain-soaked earth close by the window where she had witnessed so much.

An hour or more she lay there, cold, chilled, and with the rain-drops falling like angels' tears upon her white, upturned face; then consciousness returned to her, and with it recurred the pitiful event which had just transpired.

The cottage was dark; the rain still beat heavily on the sodden earth.

"Let me think what has happened," muttered poor Paula, struggling to her knees with a little sobbing cry.

By degrees a remembrance of all that had lately transpired occurred to her.

She rose slowly to her feet. It almost seemed as if every semblance of the Paula of old died then and there, and another creature stood in her place, leaning heavily against the latticed window.

"Heaven's vengeance has fallen upon me at last!" she muttered, pressing her hands closely over her beating heart. "I took him from Mildred, knowing he was her betrothed lover, little recking that it would break her heart, and now Heaven has in turn taken him from me and given him back to her."

Her lips quivered and her face grew pale at the thought.

How soon he had forgotten her and returned to his old allegiance! Was this the love that he had sworn could never die! And, ah! how often had he told her that if she were to die, he would follow her broken-hearted to the grave!

Alas for the perfidy of man! here he was planning for life and happiness with another! How very fickle he was!

Suddenly the thought came to her that if she were to appear before him, the very sight of her face would awaken all the old throbbing love in his heart again. But with that thought came the awful remembrance that it would be at the cost of wringing Mildred's heart anew, and she could not quite bring herself to that. Nor had she the strength to face life again with the full realization that he was lost to her for ever.

Chilled and rain-drenched, and trembling in every limb, Paula crept down the sodden path.

A clock in an adjacent belfry struck the midnight hour. Paula realised that she must have lain unconscious beneath the window, at the mercy of the pitiless storm, for long hours.

Ah, how heavy and chilly her clothes clung round her! Her limbs seemed to throb with pain. Her hands were like ice, but her head burned cruelly. The people passing by her seemed to take grotesque shapes. She had heard that this was the first symptom of madness, and her soul grew sick with horror.

Who cared for her! Who missed her out of

the world? Not even the sister to whom she had thought herself so dear, or the lover whose bride she had so nearly become.

Of all the lovers who had sued for her favour, she had loved Gregor Thorpe best. And how true she had been to him—ah, whose beauty and wit had taken the world by storm—and how little he thought of her now!

Paula wandered aimlessly along the crowded streets—for even at this hour the pedestrians were hurrying to and fro, despite the storm and the darkness.

It never occurred to the girl where fate was leading her steps. Oh, if she could but walk on and on, out of the cruel, desolate world!

Suddenly she heard the dull splashing of water, and, looking around she found that she was on the Embankment. She had left the crowd far behind her in the heart of the great city.

She stood alone, looking down into the dark water.

"Why not end it all here and now!" she muttered, pressing her chill hands to her burning brow. "It is no sin to leave this bitter world, and find peace, happiness and rest in eternity. Perhaps they will find me on the morrow, and recognize me, despite all that has happened in the past, and then perhaps Gregor might feel sorry. I am so young to die!" she whispered half aloud.

So young to find life a blank, and to drain to the dregs all the bitterness in love's cup. One plunge and all would be over. Nevermore would her beauty sway the hearts of men who had fallen so passionately in love with her in the past. Nevermore would painters and artists rave over her beauty, or poets write sonnets on the colour of her eyes or the sheen of her golden hair.

Paula clasped her little hands and raised her tear-wet face to the frowning heavens.

"You must forgive me, mother," she said. "Life has gone all wrong with me. I meant to be so grand and so great, but everything has gone wrong, and I am weary, oh, so weary, I have not the strength to live and face the future! Oh, mother, plead with the angels to forgive your poor Paula. I am coming to you. Good-bye, Gregor, my false lover, whom I have loved too well. Good-bye, Mildred, who forgot me so soon. I am going out of the world that you two may be happy."

With a little shuddering cry Paula took the fatal leap, but a strong hand pulled her back ere her feet had scarcely left *terra firma*, and a voice cried in her ear,—

"In Heaven's name, what were you about to do, girl! Have you taken leave of your senses!"

"I—I wanted to die!" moaned Paula.

"Why have you interfered? It is cruel!"

The man who had thus summarily drawn Paula back from the jaws of death did not release his hold upon her arm until he had forced her back still further from the treacherous brink toward which she struggled. And then the flickering rays of a near gas-lamp fell full upon the features of both.

Paula looked fearfully up into the face bending over her, while he was looking down at her in horror too great for words.

"Miss Garstin!" he exclaimed, in the greatest of consternation.

And she echoed faintly:

"Mr.—Mr. Brunton!"

Even before he had spoken, Paula knew who he was—the young proprietor of the silk factory where she was employed.

"What does this mean?" he cried, looking earnestly down into the beautiful, terrified young face. "I am shocked beyond words. You must come with me, Miss Garstin. I will take you at once to your home."

Paula made a faint resistance.

"No," she sobbed, "I want to die and end it all!"

But with main force young Mr. Brunton caught her hand, drew her down the path, hailed a passing cab and lifted her into it, seating himself beside her.

He remembered her number, and hurriedly gave it to the driver.

He made no attempt to check the girl's sobs

during all the long journey, but his heart beat for her with the warmest pity.

He had often admired the girl in secret, and at a distance, but had never spoken with her before.

By the time they had reached Paula's lodgings, the girl was in a state of high fever. Jane answered the summons, starting with amazement as her employer, Mr. Brunton, entered, half lifting, half carrying, the rain-drenched figure of poor Paula.

In a few brief words he explained to her what had occurred, and Jane's fright and amazement knew no bounds as she listened to the terrible story.

"Poor girl, poor little thing!" she sobbed, flinging herself down by the couch on which poor Paula had been lying. "Oh, what could she have been thinking of to do anything so rash!"

At this juncture Mr. Brunton took his departure, warning Jane to give her friend the very best attention possible.

"She will not be able to come to the factory to-morrow. Let her remain at home a week and rest. She looks as if she sadly needed it; but I will come to-morrow morning and see how she is getting along."

True to his promise, he called the next day. Paula was in a high fever and confined to her bed.

"Oh, what shall I do, sir?" sobbed Jane. "I have to go to my work, and I have no one to leave with her, and she is so very ill, poor girl!" "Do not let that trouble you," returned Mr. Brunton. "You must stay here and nurse her, and I will see that the pay of your poor little unfortunate friend and yourself goes on the same. She will be better in a few days, I am sure."

But many and many a day passed ere Paula was able to leave her couch.

During that weary time, handsome Mr. Brunton was a constant visitor at those humble apartments. Flowers and fruits and every delicacy were sent by him to Paula.

Jane discerned the truth long before the young man knew it himself—Mr. Brunton, the rich young owner of the factory, was desperately in love with poor Paula, who had only her pretty face to recommend her; and she wondered how it would end.

It was quite well known among the girls at the factory that handsome Frank Brunton's aristocratic mother thought a princess none too good for him.

Oh, what a time there would be if he were ever to attempt to bring a working girl, no matter how pure she might be, and if she were as beautiful as a houri, to his mother's aristocratic home! She would disown him just as sure as the sun shone. Was he mad that all this did not occur to him? Jane wondered.

She dared not speak of it to him, and yet she dreaded the *finale*, when it might come, for poor Paula.

As for Paula herself, she scarcely realised how eagerly she was beginning to look forward to these daily visits.

She did not know that hearts are often caught in the rebound, and by the strange vagaries of love, many a one is destined to love this one to-day and recognise in one whom they may meet to-morrow the mate to the other half of their soul—their ideal, whom Heaven intended for them.

If he had resembled Gregor Thorpe, Paula would have understood the meaning of the strange interest that was beginning to thrill in her heart at the sound of his footstep on the stair, his voice in the corridor outside, and his familiar, hasty tap at the door.

His sympathy and interest in her were very sweet. He was not like Gregor Thorpe. He was dark instead of fair, quick and graceful instead of slow, and his nature was—oh, so sympathetic!

It made one's heart warm toward him at once the way he could clasp one's hand and look down into one's eyes. There was a tender cadence in his voice that made everyone his friend.

If there was on the earth one of nature's noblemen, surely it was he. No wonder his father was proud of him and his mother adored him. All the society girls and their mammae would

have been pleased if he could have been won; but the beauties and belles had no attraction for this young man who was a general favourite.

He never felt one throb of the heartache men call love until the pale, beautiful face of Paula dawned upon his vision. He had tried to forget her, but it had been quite useless, and on the night he saved the girl's life he dimly realised the truth, that the world would be nothing to him if she was not in it.

They wondered at the factory why Jane Bolton was absent. And when one of the girls called at her humble lodgings, much to her surprise she found handsome Frank Brunton there reading from a book of poems to Paula.

In less than an hour's time this amazing discovery had travelled the length and breadth of the workshop. They whispered about it in groups, and discussed it with knowing shakes of the head. And some one ventured to remark that it was a shame his mother did not know of her son's infatuation. An anonymous letter ought to be written to her about it.

CHAPTER LXIII.

WHEN a crowd of jealous companions make up their minds to ruin one of their number upon whom fortune has smiled, they leave no stone unturned to accomplish their designs.

Frank Brunton's infatuation for Paula was thoroughly discussed, and each of the girls declared most emphatically that the proud little upstart with the pink-and-white face, big blue eyes and dimples, should never win the millionaire's son if they could prevent it, and they thought they could. They could never endure to see one who always held herself so much aloof from them ride past them in her carriage, with the sheen of her silks and jewels glistening in the sunlight, while they tramped wearily on foot along the dusty streets on their way to their work.

They all agreed that proud Mrs. Brunton would be just the one to break it up—to nip this little romance most effectually in the bud. That night the ring-leaders met by appointment in the attic room of the cheap lodging-house where one of their number boarded, and in getting up that letter, which they believed was to wreck two lives, what one did not think of another did.

At length the epistle destined to cause so much ruin was got up to suit them. It read as follows:

"MRS. BRUNTON:

"DEAR MADAME,—This has been written to inform you as to what is going on, for it's a burning shame for you not to know. There is a young girl named Paula Garstin, who was employed in your factory up to a very short time ago. You son, Mr. Brunton, is just carried away with love of her, and he goes to see her every evening of his life, and there is no end to the flowers and costly books that he sends her. She is very beautiful, and it has always been her boast that there never was a man who crossed her path, be he rich or be he poor, whom she could not win if the notion took her. She made a dead set for Mr. Brunton, with the result this letter tells you about. And he is soon to marry her if you don't look out."

When this was sealed and addressed they all declared in chorus it would be just the thing to spoil Paula Garstin's chance of winning handsome Frank Brunton. In conferring over the matter they all declared it would be safer by far to engage a special messenger to deliver it in person, for letters had been known to go astray.

But even after the messenger had been called they again decided that it would be best to pilot the boy to the house in a body, lest he make a mistake and bring it to the wrong place.

Much to the youth's disgust, this plan was strictly adhered to.

"Who ever heard of a parcel of women following a messenger-boy when he has nothing of more importance to deliver than an old letter," he growled. "They had better take it themselves, and save the cost of paying for me!"

It was early in the evening when they reached the Bruntons' house in a body.

"Now you go up the steps, and we will watch from across the street," they commanded; and the lad did as he was told.

It was just by chance that the door opened as he stretched out his hand to touch the bell, and a tall, elegant, haughty woman wrapped in furs, accompanied by an elderly gentleman, stepped out into the vestibule.

From across the way the girls recognised this to be the elder Mr. Brunton and his haughty wife. Evidently the boy recognised her as well, for he darted forward eagerly and placed the misadventure in her hand.

"Why, what is this? Who is it from?" cried the lady in astonishment.

"The best way to find out is to open it and see, my dear," said Mr. Brunton, grimly. "I wonder that solution did not occur to you before you asked the question."

His lady gave him a withering look, but deigned no reply.

There was always a mild passage at arms between the two.

"See, the carriage has just rolled up to the door, and we are almost late for Mrs. Mordaunt's reception. I have not time to read it now," she said, knowing that he would like very much to know its contents; so she crushed it in the pocket of her dress, and called down the broad marble steps to the carriage which was in waiting, and the next instant she had rolled out of sight, much to the chagrin of the patient watchers across the way.

Not until Mrs. Brunton returned from the reception did she think of the letter in her pocket. After ordering her dressing-gown and slippers, and donning them, the lady proceeded to apprise herself of its contents.

"What an angular hand!" she commented, as she turned the letter over and over again in her jewelled hand before breaking the seal. "If one should judge from the calligraphy I should say my correspondent is not a person of education."

Little dreaming of what was in store for her, the lady broke open the seal and glanced thoughtlessly over the contents. But as her eye traversed the first few lines, her face paled; and as she read on and on, a gasping cry broke from her lips.

She started to her feet, then fell suddenly back in her chair, with a shriek of rage.

"How can I believe it and live! Frank, the pride of my life, the joy of my heart, entrapped by one of the work-girls! Heavens! I have feared so long come about at last! I have always urged his father to sell the factory and go abroad, for the very reason that my son might get infatuated with some pretty-faced work-girl and want to make her his wife, and he laughed at me; and now the mischief that I foresaw has come about. I would rather see my son lying dead in his grave than see him wedded to a girl of low degree! For centuries we have kept up the pride of our race. He will be the first one to make a *méalliance* and blot our fair escutcheon. It shall never be—never! I could not brook it."

She rose and rang the bell with such a peal that it brought her maid in terror to her side.

"Tell Jenkins to step to my son's room and tell him—that is, if he has not retired yet—that I desire him to come at once to my boudoir. I wish to see him upon a matter of the utmost importance to me."

My lady paced the room with the utmost impatience until the maid returned.

"Come in—come in," she said, hurriedly, in answer to the girl's tap.

"Young Mr. Brunton is not in his room now, Jenkins bid me tell you."

His mother stopped short.

"I shall remain up until he does come," she answered. "Tell Jenkins to give him my message, and say that I am waiting for him."

The girl bowed.

"You are not to return to me to-night. I shall not need you. I shall sit up until my son comes in."

"I am thinking she will have a long time to sit



"MISS SARSTIN!" EXCLAIMED FRANK BRUNTON, IN THE GREATEST OF CONSTERNATION.

up," laughed the maid, while gossiping over the affair down in the servants' hall. "Heaven help poor Master Frank when he does come in," she continued, "for her face is as black as a thunder-cloud. She will have a curious lecture for him, that is certain, and oh! such a stormy one!"

And they all felt sorry, for Mr. Brunton was such a general favourite, with never a word to say to any one of them, save what was pleasant. He was quite as much beloved by them as his mother was hated and feared.

They all knew the one great fear that darkened her life, and had many a laugh over it at her expense.

They always declared among themselves that Master Frank was sure to fall in love at last with some pretty but poor little girl for the very reason that his mother was so violently opposed to it—a sure way of making him look out for a pretty face among the working-girls.

And then only that day a man had called with a bouquet of the rarest flowers, saying young Mr. Brunton had commissioned him to take it to a young girl whose address he had lost.

They all remembered the look of consternation and the deep flush that overspread his face when he was called down to see the man. And on that occasion he requested them to say nothing about the affair, lest it might get to his mother's ear; then they knew beyond a doubt that there must be a young girl in the case.

Besides, they were tolerably sure he must be in love, for he was as merry as a lark about the house, and on two or three occasions he had made the mistake of calling his pretty young cousin, who often visited the house, Paula.

She had rallied him on the subject, asking him if he had a sweetheart named Paula, at which thrust he coloured violently, denying the soft impeachment.

Then, again, he was very anxious to have his cousin sing for him all the love songs she knew, and he had been humming them round the house ever since.

The whole solution of the matter was that

Frank Brunton was head over heels in love, and his sweetheart was a girl named Paula; and she must be as poor as poor could be, or she would not live in the upper story of a tenement house, as the man who had brought the flowers had indicated.

They did hope that his angry lady mother had not found out about this little love affair of Master Frank's.

And they hoped, too, that Mrs. Brunton would be asleep by the time her son returned, especially if she intended to raise a storm about her hapless son's head.

Mrs. Brunton had long hours to wait. Still Frank did not come.

"Where is he? what can keep him, I wonder!" she cried, watching the pearl and gold clock on the mantelpiece as it measured off the long hours of the night.

At length, tired out, my lady fell into a deep, troubled sleep; and soon after her son entered.

They gave him the message she had left for him.

Frank hurried with alacrity to his mother's room. As he opened the door he was amazed to find her sitting in her arm-chair fast asleep.

He bent his dark, handsome head, and kissed her, but the action did not waken her, she slept so soundly.

"I wonder what she wanted to see me about!" he ruminated. "It is a pity to wake her, she is sleeping so soundly. Whatever it is it can wait. It's probably some little pleasant gossip she has in store for me. Oh, if I could only tell her of my beautiful love, Paula! Even though she is so prejudiced against one in her station, her heart might be softened because of my great affection. She loved once, and I know it is not in human nature for her to be displeased with me on that account. Oh, if she could only see how sweet and good dear, tender little Paula is, her heart would melt toward her at once, and she would not forbid it when I whispered to her that on the morrow I meant to ask Paula the

great boon that would make or mar all my after life."

Just at that moment his mother stirred uneasily in her chair, her eyelids quivered and her lips moved.

He bent his ear, and caught the words she muttered so incoherently.

"It can never be! I would sooner see him dead than that. It would break my heart!"

Frank drew back and looked oddly enough at his mother.

"What is it that is running through her mind?" he murmured. "I had better leave her now, lest I disturb her," and he retreated softly to the door.

Still she did not wake.

He walked slowly to his room. What he had heard disturbed his mind more than he cared to admit even to himself, and like all men who are in love, his heart grew heavy with a foreboding which he could scarcely define.

He dreamed that night of Paula, and his dreams were troubled.

He thought a wide, dark, turbulent river divided them.

He called to her to cross over to him; and as she reached the middle of the plank which he had extended, it broke suddenly in twain.

And despite his maddening efforts to save her, he saw her swept down, down into the turbulent waters, the swift, dark, eddying waves carrying her on their treacherous course far out of his sight.

"Paula!" he shouted at the top of his voice, "I will save you my darling! You are dearer to me than life itself. Cling to the plank, love; I am coming to save you!"

At that moment there was a tap at the door, and in answer to his summons, Mr. Frank Brunton was astonished to see his mother come walking into the room with a face so dark and stormy it almost took his breath away. She held an open letter in her hand.

(To be continued.)



LORD LEIGH STOOD AS ONE SPELLBOUND. SURELY IT WAS HIS WIFE!—HIS ROSAMOND.

NAMELESS.

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CHAPTER XV.

THERE was no further opportunity for Guy Ainslie and Lillian to exchange confidences, and the girl herself desired none. He knew now that her sin had not been what he thought it, and yet he refused her friendship. Surely if he were so hard and stern it was happier for her to see little of him!

But she loved him still. There are some hearts so true and loyal that with them to love once is to love for ever. The intense gratitude born of his kindness that cold, dismal, autumn day when they first met, strengthened by his protecting care at Paddington railway-station, had ripened into an affection which not even his cruel reproaches in the schoolroom at Castle Dacre, his cold refusal in Mrs. Grant's drawing-room ever to be her friend, could destroy.

Guy Ainslie went home from that interview at Mrs. Grant's as one that walked on air; the cruel anxiety which had haunted him all these months was at an end. Lillian was found, and his darling was worthy of his love; her only sin was that from being a rich man's idolised child she had become at his death a nameless wanderer.

A great joy filled his heart as he thought of the happiness he could bring to her. Guy was not conceited, but he had read the language of Lillian's shy, violet eyes, and he believed that his greatest wish would be granted, and Lillian would be his wife.

His wife! The strong man almost trembled at the thought of what his home might be with that fair face to shine upon him always, with Lillian at his side for weal or woe until death parted them.

"Kate always liked her," he murmured to himself, thinking of his sister. "I am glad to think she will welcome my darling gladly."

He reached Leckenham soon after eight, and the little maid received him with the message,

"Some gentlemen were waiting to see him on business. She had shown them into the dining-room."

"On business!" her master repeated slowly. "There must be some mistake: no one comes to see me here on business."

"They said it was very important, sir. They had been to the office, and found you had left. They have been waiting here two hours. Mistress sent them in some tea."

Surprised, half-annoyed, Guy Ainslie laid aside his hat and greatcoat, and turned towards the dining-room. Not a suspicion had he as to the errand of his visitors; his acquaintances in Leckenham were very few—the home was more his sister's than his. Business of all kinds was reserved for the office. That two gentlemen should waste two hours of their time in waiting for him was passing strange!

A strikingly handsome man he looked as he went in to greet his unexpected guests, one who had the imprint of nobility stamped on every feature.

Two gentlemen arose at his approach; one was an elderly man; the other a few years his junior, had a tall, erect bearing, and soldierly air. He offered his hand in cordial fashion.

"Guy Ainslie, I believe!"

"Yes," returned the person thus addressed, "that is my name; but you have the advantage of me, sir. I do not think I have ever seen you."

"No. I am Captain Cecil Beaumont, and this my friend Mr. Martin, solicitor, of the Inner Temple, and legal adviser to the late Lord Earl."

Guy Ainslie bowed. He really did not see how these facts concerned him.

"You are probably aware that Lord Earl has been dead more than a year, and that the utmost efforts have been made to find his heir."

Guy shook his head.

"I am afraid you have come to the wrong person, gentlemen, if you expect me to give you any information. I never saw Lord Earl in my life, and I know nothing whatever of his family ties."

Mr. Martin and Captain Beaumont exchanged glances; such utter disregard of what fortune might have in store struck them as marvellous.

"I do not think we are mistaken," said the lawyer, politely. "A short time ago we observed in a jeweller's window a signet ring, engraved with the motto of the Earls. It struck my attention at once, and I went into the shop to try and purchase the ring, but I found it was not for sale; it had merely been left there for repairs and alteration. I cross-questioned the jeweller pretty closely, and he told me the ring belonged to you; and from the store you set by it, it was evidently an heirloom."

Guy Ainslie smiled. He held up his left hand, upon whose little finger the ring in question, a magnificent bloodstone, flashed.

"Is this the object of your inquiries, Mr. Martin?"

"Yes."

"Then I fear what I have to tell you respecting it will disappoint you. It is an heirloom in our family. My father wore it to his dying day; he inherited it from his mother, whose maiden name was Campbell."

"Aye! and who was the only child of the Hon. Marguerite Earl and her husband, Laurence Campbell. Your great-grandmother, Mr. Ainslie, was the daughter of one Lord Earl, and the sister of another. It was his grandson who died last year, childless and without a will, consequently you are his heir-at-law."

Guy Ainslie stared at his companions.

"It is impossible!" he returned, firmly. "Why, I did not even know we were connected!"

"It has been our care to prove the connection. We have searched for the certificate of Marguerite Earl's marriage, and of her daughters' union with your grandfather. There is not the slightest flaw in the evidence; no single link is missing."

"But," persisted Guy, "there was the brother of my ancestress Marguerite Earl; surely he left descendants!"

"He left only one son, the father of the late

Lord Earl. Really, Mr. Ainslie, it is very difficult to convince you of your own good fortune!"

"I confess I do not understand it."

"Well, you must have to do so soon, I can assure you. Your position will be a splendid one. The late Lord Earl never lived up to his income; there must be about sixty thousand pounds in funded property. Earlsmere itself, one of the loveliest estates in Blankshire, and a revenue of many thousands a year, and it is all yours. There's not a creature on earth to dispute your right to it. There will be some legal rights to go through, of course, and a pretty considerable sum to pay away in legacy duty; but before the new year is many days old you will be established in your rights as Lord Earl of Earlsmere; and I hope ere long we may congratulate you upon finding a charming countess, to share your title and honours."

Captain Beaumont held out his hand.

"You will let me congratulate you now," he said, pleasantly. "I am the cousin of the late, Lady Earl, and I have taken a great interest in tracing the heir to her husband's property. I am a lonely man, without many family ties, but such as it is, Lord Earl, I am proud to offer you my friendship."

Gay sat as one lost in a dream; the news was so strange, so wonderful, so unexpected. Could it really be that he was an English peer of vast wealth!—that he would be able to place a coronet on Lillian's fair, white brow!

The two men who watched him thought they had never seen any one bear the news of sudden prosperity with such calmness.

"But surely," Gay began at last, "my late kinsman had some design for his money! He never could have meant it to go to a stranger. His riches may be mine by the strict letter of the law, but there must have been someone near and dear to him for whom he intended a portion at least of his great wealth!"

"Your suggestion does you honour," said the solicitor, warmly. "I have no hesitation in telling you that there was such an one; that the late Lord Earl had intended Earlsmere itself, and all his fortune, to pass to an adopted daughter."

A strange thought came to the new peer's mind. Could it possibly be that Lillian—his Lillian, so he already called her in his heart—should be his kinsman's heiress!

"I know what you are thinking," said the lawyer, warmly. "You are saying you can never take advantage of such an accident; that you will at once restore everything to the young lady!"

"You have guessed rightly, sir!"

"It is a generous thought, but it is impossible. Rest easy, Lord Earl, in your new honours. She for whom your beautiful home, your vast wealth was intended, can never need either."

"You mean she has married, and her husband's riches surpass even mine."

"I mean that she is dead!"

"Dead!"

"Even so," said Captain Beaumont, with a strange sadness in his voice. "She lost her father—as she believed him—without a moment's preparation. She learned within three days that she was a nameless orphan, penniless and homeless. The man who had professed to love her deserted her, and, driven almost frantic by such a sea of trouble, the poor girl yielded to temptation, and took the life she had ceased to value."

Deep indignation sounded in his voice. The new Lord Earl replied with a grave sadness, for he was thinking of his own love, and how much her fate resembled that of his kinsman's daughter.

"Poor child!"

"No one could blame her. It was his fault from first to last, cold-blooded, heartless villain! Lord Earl, when I saw to what his cruelty had driven her, I regretted the days of duelling were over."

"And he got off scot free?"

"Of course, no one could touch him; but there is an unspoken law of public feeling, and that condemned him pretty strongly. You need not fear his society being forced upon you, my lord; he was obliged to leave the neighbourhood within a very short time of his victim's death!"

"And now," proposed the Captain, "we will

say good-night. We have intruded on you an unreasonable time, and I am quite sure your good sister is impatient for us to be gone, that she may learn what we have detained you so long discussing."

"Will you not tell her yourselves!" said Gay, warmly. "Kate and I have been so much to each other that I think she will thank you better for your tidings than I have been able to do. My father died when I was a child, and left nothing but debts behind him. Whatever I am, whatever I may be, I owe it all, under Heaven, to my sister, and I should like her to hear of my prosperity first from you."

He threw the door open and led the way to the drawing-room. Miss Ainslie was there alone, a strange anxiety written on her face. She started up with an eager question as her brother entered.

"Oh, Gay! is there anything the matter?"

"Nothing in the world, my dear Miss Ainslie," said Mr. Martin, kindly. "We have brought your brother a piece of news, which I suspect will please you even more than it did him."

Kate's ideas took a brilliant plunge.

"Oh, Gay! have they made you a partner?"

"No, Miss Ainslie, you are quite mistaken," said Captain Beaumont, smiling. "In fact, we have persuaded your brother that he will have to leave the firm at once!"

"Leave the firm!"

"Yes, because he will never need any wealth or honour that can come to him from it. Mr. Ainslie exists no longer! You must learn to know your brother afresh as Lord Earl of Earlsmere!"

CHAPTER XVI.

It often seemed to Lillian, on looking back, that no time in all her life had seemed quite so long as her visit at Kensington.

True, Mrs. Grant treated her with all her old kindness; the children clung to her with pretty, endearing ways, but there was a strange unrest in her heart. Whilst with Lady Leigh she had known it was impossible for her to see Gay Ainslie.

Now she was ever expecting him; each knock, each letter, made her heart beat. She was always looking for the face that never came—the face dearest to her on earth.

"Gay Ainslie looks well," said her gentle hostess, when some allusion had been made to his brief, flying visit. "I think he has quite got over his disappointment, and that the wound Lady Dacres inflicted on him by her treachery is healed at last."

Lillian answered nothing; she felt somehow she could not discuss Gay quite as an ordinary person. Perhaps her blushes reminded Mary Grant of the little secret she had once confessed.

"Dear!" she said, gently stroking the fair hair caressingly; "has not absence done its work; haven't you learned yet that Gay Ainslie is 'only a man like other men'?"

Lillian shook her head.

"Don't speak of it, please," she whispered. "It makes me so ashamed; and yet I have done nothing wrong. It is only he was so kind to me; he won my heart almost without my knowing it, and now I cannot change. I wish I could."

"And Archie?"

Lillian started. She had fancied from Mrs. Grant's allusion her brother had forgotten his passing infatuation.

"He, too, finds it hard to forget. Lillian, my darling, I should so like you for a sister. Tell me, is there no hope for my brother?"

Lillian hid her face on Mrs. Grant's shoulder, and whispered—

"No!"

"If you would only bring yourself to think of it," answered her friend, "I believe you would be very happy with Archie; he would give you just the quiet, careful home you need."

"But I do not love him—I never shall."

"Dear, believe me, in time you will forget Gay Ainslie. No love lives on quite without hope; in time Gay's image will be forgotten."

"I think not."

"You are wasting your love upon a man who will never return it; Guy put aside all thought of love or marriage long ago when Vivian Ormond deceived him. I think myself, sometimes, that unless Sir John dies and leaves his old love free he will never have a wife."

Lillian had thought so, too.

"And he would not make you happy, dear," went on her mentor, fondly. "Guy has his way to make in the world; he is very ambitious. If a time came when his wife's past history were discussed—if it grew noised abroad that she was nameless, that she owed all to him—I do not think his pride would ever survive it. Even if Guy loved you, Lillian, he is the last person in the world you ought to marry."

"He does not love me, he never will; we are only discussing impossibilities."

"Then, dear, if you say frankly it is an impossibility, tell me, do you mean to waste your whole life in thinking of it?"

"I don't understand," said Lillian, a little stiffly; "why should marriage be the end and aim of a girl's life?"

"Because it is her natural vocation."

"Then I do not want my vocation. I am very happy as I am."

"Yes, Lady Leigh loves you as a daughter; but think, dear, she is getting old, she cannot live many years longer. You will then be stranded once more on life's wide ocean, my dear. Believe me, you are too pretty, too gentle to be tossed about the world; what you need is a home, and someone to love you and care for you."

She pressed her lips to the girl's forehead, and went out without another word, wisely thinking her little lecture would make more impression if Lillian were left to muse over it alone.

The girl sat on by the bright wood fire. She was full of a strange, keen pain. Was it just as Mrs. Grant had said? If Gay really loved her must she send him away—must she with her own hand dash the cup of happiness from her lips?

Why should Archibald Darby be thought a safe and suitable match for her? Why? Because he was rich and of an assured position did his own sister admit, ay, and urge that the shadow on her life would matter nothing to him, and yet in the same voice tell her that same shadow, if she married her life's love, would blight their happiness and prosperity!

Lillian thought she understood. Mr. Darby owed nothing to his own exertions; he was not the architect of his own fortunes, and he was of a nature which cares little for the frowns of others.

Guy, on the contrary, had his way to make; and he was proud, ay, intensely proud, sensitively alive to any breath of dishonour. She, who worshipped him, knew his character well; she mused over it until her decision was taken. Even if her heart's wish were granted her she would push it from her; she would never let injury come to Gay Ainslie through love of her. She would never live to see a day when, bound to her by his own solemn word, he should yet regret the ties that united him. No; anything in the whole world was better than that!

So she sat on in the December firelight, half-dreaming of the future which eighteen months ago had looked so fair, and was now so blank and drear; and so, alone and silent, the man who loved her better ten thousand times than his own life found her.

"Lillian!"

She looked up and met his eyes—the eyes she had seen so often in her dreams, bending over her with a strange, protecting fondness. She spoke no word; it seemed to her what she had called an impossibility had actually come to pass. Her hero had learned to love her; her King Cophetua was ready to stoop to his beggar maid.

"My darling!" the man's voice was strong and clear; there was no mistaking the truthful ring in its every syllable. "My darling, I have come to tell you why I refused your friendship the other night. Lillian, we never can be friends; to me you must be all or nothing. Dearest, I want you to put your hand in mine, and promise

to give yourself to me. I want you at my side, Lillian, in joy or sorrow, sickness or health. I want to have the right to protect you from every trial, every danger. Darling, lift up your beautiful eyes to my face and tell me it is not all in vain; that you will not send me away disappointed and heart-broken, but will be my own beloved wife!"

And then in the firelight, looking into her eyes as though he could read his sentence written there, Guy waited for her answer. And it was long in coming. She loved him so, she trusted him with all her heart; she was weary, oh! so weary, of her lonely life. She longed, with such an unutterable longing, to throw herself into his arms and claim them as her sure refuge from all sorrow; but Mrs. Grant's warning rang in her ears. She knew the man she loved was loyal and true, but she knew also that he was proud and sensitive; that he had had a long uphill fight with fortune. Ought she, could she add to his burdens? Ought she, nameless and obscure, to take advantage of his generosity, and become a clog to his future?

She loved him, but there are some few women in the world so true, so noble, that they can conquer even love itself rather than injure their heart's dearest. Lillian was of these few. Raising her violet eyes to Guy Ainslie's face, she said, simply,—

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I shall respect and honour you while life remains, but I can never marry you."

"Why?"

His eyes were bent upon her face, she shrank beneath their scrutiny.

"Do not ask me!"

"I must ask you. I love you, Lillian, as I think few women are loved. I must know why you reject me. I claim an explanation as my right!"

She was silent; the words she longed to speak must not be uttered, and no others came to her lips.

"Lillian," said the strong man, tenderly, "my little Lillian, can't you love me, my darling? I may have seemed hard and stern, but to you I will be all gentleness. Darling, trust yourself to me!"

"I cannot," she cried, bitterly, "I cannot. Oh! do not ask me why."

"I do ask you."

Her tears were falling fast. Her grief moved Guy Ainslie's very heart but he persisted in his question; he meant to have his answer.

"You never seemed to dislike me," he said, gently; "from the moment of our first meeting you treated me as a friend."

"But you will not give me your friendship," she said, quietly; "you refused it me!"

"Because I want something more. Lillian, did you feel nothing more than friendship for me that last day at Castle Dacres, when you put your hand upon my shoulder and begged me not to judge you harshly?"

"You shook off my hand," she replied, wistfully.

"Ay, because I was under a cruel mistake. I tell you I know the truth now. I loved you wildly even then; to love I now add honour. I ask you, as the highest blessing Heaven can give, to be my wife."

"And I thank you, but refuse."

"Why?"

"Am I bound to give a reason?"

"Yes."

"But if I have none?"

"You must have, you are not a coquette! It can give you no pleasure to trifle with a man's holiest feelings. Lillian, do you refuse me because they have told you the secret of my life? Because three years ago, I was engaged to my cousin, Vivian Ormond, she whom you knew as Lady Dacres? My darling, this need not make you hesitate. If my love for her were not dead and gone, do you think I would injure you by asking you to marry me?"

"Is it not that," she murmured.

"Have I a rival?"

"No!"

"You want me to believe that, being heart whole and fancy free, you yet refuse my love!"

She was silent.

"Lillian," and his arms closed her from their clasp, while his eyes again sought hers. "As Heaven is above us I believe you love me! Sweet, I believe your heart is mine, though you may not know it. If you can look into my face and say you can never care for me, I promise you that you shall never more be troubled by the mention of my love."

She raised her head proud and erect; she tried to do his bidding, but words failed her. The falsehood would not come—Guy Ainslie strained her to his heart.

"Ah, little girl," he murmured, reproachfully, "you could not be untrue. I knew you would not look into my face and tell me a lie."

"I love you," she whispered. "I think I have loved you ever since we first met."

"And yet you made me miserable."

"How?"

"By sending me away!"

"I cannot help it," she moaned; "it is not my fault. Oh, Mr. Ainslie, indeed it is not."

"Call me by my name," he cried, passionately. "Never let me be anything but Guy from your lips, Lillian."

"Guy," she said simply, repeating the name in mute obedience to his will. "Guy, you know I can never be aught to you, never while I live."

"And why?"

The girl nervéd herself for the effort.

"Because your wife must be above suspicion; because her past must be open as a book, and in mine there is a secret."

"Tell it to me!"

"How can I! I do not even know it myself. Guy, I have not even a name of my own; my parents may have been felons. How can I take the shadow of disgrace into your family? How can I bring such a burden upon you?"

Guy Ainslie fairly laughed in his glad relief.

"Is that all, you foolish child!" he said, lightly. "What does that matter! Do you think I could love you better if you had half a dozen families claiming you as a descendant! Really, Lillian, I am very angry with you!"

"It matters a great deal, Guy!"

"I say it matters nothing!"

"You say so now! You love me, and you are so unselfish you must wreck your future for my sake. But do you think I could accept the sacrifice which would blight your prospects?"

He knew that the news of his honour had not reached her, that she was replying to him as simple Guy Ainslie, who worked hard for his living, and he never told her that he was Lord Earl. He felt his riches and title would only be so many obstacles to his success.

"I think if you love me you ought to marry me!" he said, earnestly. "Think of what my life will be without you!"

"You will forget me in time!"

"I am not good at forgetting."

A long, long silence, broken only by the ticking of the gold ormolu clock on the mantelpiece. Lillian shivered even in the firelight. Guy's heart ached as he noted how frail and delicate she looked. What would his riches and honours avail him if she persisted in her refusal to share them!

"Lillian!" he said, hoarsely; "don't let your absurd pride wreck both our lives! Darling, if you love me, nothing in the world should divide us!"

"But in the future!"

"Let the future be my care! Don't you think I should go on loving you, you poor, foolish, little thing?"

"You might see all you had sacrificed. Your friends might convince you of how you had spoiled your life. Guy, if we were married, and I saw that you regretted it, I think I should kill myself!"

"You never would see it, Lillian. What am I to say to you? How am I to convince you?"

She nestled the least bit closer to him, and her golden head rested on his shoulder. He pressed passionate kisses upon her lips, and she suffered him if this was the last time they two were to stand together as lovers. If his own welfare demanded that she should give him up surely—ah! surely,

she might carry the memory of his caresses—the thought of this one moment of bliss—with her out into the dreary darkness of her lonely future.

"You cannot send me away!" he cried, passionately. "Lillian, you must conquer your pride, and be merciful to us both!"

She was silent; her strength to resist his will seemed ebbing fast away.

"Listen!" he told her, gravely. "I will not take your answer now! I will not listen to your refusal. I will leave you for a month. I have to go out of London on important business, I will come to you on my return. Think well over it, my darling; ask anyone in the whole world, and they will tell you the same thing, that for a vain chimera you ought not to blight our lives! I shall tell my sister of your fears; she loved you from the very first, dear. You know what she is—how generous, brave and true. If she tells you you will be right to marry me, will you try to overcome your absurd scruples?"

"She will not say so!"

"I think she will. If you send me away, when I return for my answer, do you know what I shall do, Lillian?"

"No!"

"I shall devote my whole life—my whole fortune—to solving the mystery of your birth. I shall make you tell me every fact you know; every trifle that can throw a ray of light upon the puzzle, and then I shall give my every effort, my whole strength, to solving the question. You will be imposing a cruel task upon me, Lillian; but if you impose it, I suppose it must be done."

"You are angry with me, Guy!" and her hand lingered caressingly upon his face.

"I think I would rather you were less noble," he said, fondly. "Other men would reverence your scruples. I know the unselfishness which prompts them; but oh! my darling, tell me, how am I to bear them if they rob me of my wife?"

A few tender words of farewell and they parted.

Guy felt as if he could not endure Mrs. Grant's kindly, commonplace just then. He held Lillian's hand in his as he told her that, if he was alive, he should return that day month for her decision.

"But I shall not be here!"

"Where then?"

"At Lady Leigh's," and she explained to him the position she filled at Eaton-square.

"Well, I shall come there then. I am glad you are happy with the Countess; but, Lillian, I would prefer you were no one's companion but mine. When do you return?"

"To-morrow. Lady Leigh has spared me all this time, because her son came home to spend Christmas with her."

"What, the handsome widower! I will not be jealous of him, Lillian. He is well-nigh old enough to be your father, and they say his heart was buried in his wife's grave."

"I have never seen him."

"Adieu, my best and dearest. Remember, I do not accept your decision as final. I shall come for my real answer in a month?"

When he had gone—when the last echo of his footsteps died away—Lillian felt relieved that her stay in Kensington was so nearly over.

After all, kind as Mrs. Grant was, there were a few trying things in visiting the sister of the man she had rejected. Life at Eaton-square might be more monotonous, but, at least, it was more peaceful.

Guy's second visit she resolutely put out of her head. Lillian would not even think of it, and all that devolved on it. She went back to Lady Leigh with an intense desire not to let her mind recur to all the excitement of the day before.

The Countess received her fondly.

"My dear, I have missed you so—I could not do without you any longer! Gerald is here, but he could not quite make up to me for the loss of my little girl!"

It was pleasant to be received so warmly—it was sweet to feel that, nameless and obscure as she was, she had a place in that warm, womanly heart.

Lilian replied gratefully. She took up her old place in Lady Leigh's boudoir, and tried hard to imagine that the events of the last few days were only an idle dream.

She wondered a little when she should see the Earl. She little knew that his mother dreaded the meeting.

She had sent Lilian away for no other reason than to spare her son's feelings on seeing the girl's close resemblance to his wife. Lady Leigh had landed a very few days at home would suffice her son, but he still lingered, and she missed her little favourite, openly lamenting her absence, until Gerald himself said, carelessly,—

"You had better send for her back. If you are afraid of my being bothered by her you need not trouble. I can breakfast in the library. I don't suppose I shall even know Miss Green is in the house."

And three whole days passed before he ever caught sight of his mother's companion, and then it came about in this wise. He was returning from a dinner-party at an hour when he knew his mother would be in bed, and he turned into the dining-room, expecting to find a fire and lights. To his discontent cold and darkness greeted him.

"There is a fire in my lady's boudoir, my lord," said the butler, after patiently enduring his master's reproaches; "shall I have the gas lighted there?"

Lord Leigh refused.

"I know the way," he said, surlily. "Another time, remember, this room is to be kept in readiness for me!"

It was but little after ten. He had left the party early, and did not mean to retire to rest for another hour. He turned the door of the boudoir and entered, well pleased to see the welcome glow of firelight and the soft rays of the lamp. Then it seemed to him that the last twenty years had rolled away and his wife stood before him, young and beautiful as when he parted from her.

He stood as one spellbound. It was his wife!—his Rosamond!—the girl he had loved and married more than twenty years before! But she looked no older than when he left her! She was dressed in the fashion of the day.

"Rosamond!" he gasped, as one in a strange nightmare. "What does it mean? My wife—my darling! Have you come back to me from the grave?"

(To be continued.)

REUNITED.

—20—

"HASN'T he anybody in the world—anybody at all—to look after him?"

Sybil Elmer asked the question as she looked tenderly down into a sweet little face that nestled against her soft fur cloak in a most confiding manner.

"Nobody, so far as we know," the matron of the home replied. "He was born here, and his mother died soon after. She came here just the night before he was born, and we could never find out anything about her. Nobody came to inquire, and the baby has been left on our hands ever since."

"Poor little fellow!" Sybil murmured, softly; and she laid her cheek against the baby's little face. "He is such a pretty boy, Mrs. Firth. If you don't think there will be any trouble about it I think I will keep him."

"No trouble at all, Miss Elmer," said the matron, eagerly. "It is very good of you, and I am sure Willie is a lucky boy to have found so good a friend."

The baby opened his round, dark eyes and smiled what fond mothers call an angel-smile. One little hand was thrust out with curious uncertainty, and the tiny fingers buried themselves in the fur of Sybil's cloak.

A soft baby chuckle and a kicking of the small feet accompanied this act, and the girl felt that curious thrill which every true woman feels when a friendless child is laid in her arms.

"You are going to be my baby, Willie," she said, kissing the little one.

And so the bargain was concluded.

Society opened its eyes when it heard of Miss Elmer's astonishing freak.

"Awfully queer, isn't it?" was the general query, "but rich people always get cranky, they say. Of course, you know Sybil is tired of everything. She has been everywhere and had everything, so that there is nothing left to amuse her. I suppose this baby is merely an occupation, and she will tire of it soon enough, I fancy."

"I wonder she doesn't marry," everybody said. "She must have had plenty of chances."

Sybil had been engaged to be married a long while ago, but the engagement was broken off, and her lover married somebody else—out of spite, it was said, although he was very much in love with her, and that when the engagement was broken he went to the bad.

It was said, too, that one time, when he had been drinking a good deal of champagne, some Spanish woman got hold of him, and inveigled him into marrying her. Anyhow he was married, and rumour said that, notwithstanding all this gossip, Sybil loved him still.

She had Willie, and he was as sweet a baby as ever gladdened a mother's heart.

He grew more winning every day. He was a handsome little fellow, and he and Sybil together made a picture at which many people stared in admiration.

When Willie had learned to walk and talk, Sybil took him everywhere with her.

One day they were on the pier together at Eastbourne, and some one saw them. Sybil did not know that the dark eyes of Lionel Vane were fixed upon her as she sat there, watching the child with his bucketful of sand.

"Bring it to mamma, dear," she said—for, in spite of everybody, she let the child call her so. "Let mamma see what Willie has in his bucket."

Lionel Vane looked at the beautiful child with a savage feeling in his heart.

"That is her child!" he said to himself.

"What a fool I am! I might have known she would forget me, and yet— Oh, Sybil! My lost darling! I would give my life this moment just to kneel at your feet and have you smile on me as you once did."

He caught his breath and turned away quickly, for Sybil had the child in her arms, and quite unconscious of her observer, was kissing him in a rapturous manner.

Vane would have gone away at once, for he dreaded while he longed to meet her. But for a moment he was quite lost to his surroundings.

His mind travelled back to the time when he had been the accepted lover of this girl, who was and always had been to him the one woman in the world.

He thought, with vain and bitter regret, of the trifling quarrel that had separated them. How wretched he had been since! His miserable marriage with the Spanish woman must have sunk him very low in Sybil's esteem! and now—

A splash and a wild scream brought him to his senses.

The scream came from Sybil's lips, and in the same moment that he sprang to her side he saw Willie's white dress sink below the water that curled and dashed around the pier.

"Save him—oh, save him!" Sybil cried, wildly.

And in her terror there came to her no sense of recognition of the man so close beside her.

"Don't be frightened," he said, quickly. "I can swim. I will get him."

In the same moment he got off his coat and shoes and leaped into the water.

Willie's little, struggling form had come up to the surface again, and Lionel grasped the child as the waves whirled him shoreward. Then receding, they caught them both, and it was all that he could do to hold the child out of the water while he kept himself afloat.

It was a terrible struggle, such as none but they who have narrowly escaped drowning can well understand. But Lionel was a powerful swimmer, and he gained slowly but surely the shallow water along the shore.

It was a breathless moment when he sank exhausted at Sybil's feet, with Willie in his arms.

"I saved him for you!" he gasped; and then the scene faded away in the mist of unconsciousness.

When he opened his eyes again, with a sense of awful weakness, he saw beside him the still, deathlike form of little Willie.

"What are you doing?" he asked, with an effort, as he saw the well-meant but ineffectual efforts of the bystanders to resuscitate the child. "That is not the way! Take off his dress; lift his arms up and draw them down again. Be quick!"

He was too much exhausted to aid them himself, but his orders were executed, and the little bare arms were promptly raised and lowered till artificial respiration was replaced by a faint, fluttering sigh, and they knew the child was safe.

Lionel had not looked once at Sybil, but his eyes were fastened on the child's bare arm on which there were a number of queer little red spots, and one long, red streak just above the elbow.

This seemed to fascinate him. He stared at it steadfastly till Sybil's face came between him and the child, and she said, in a low, uneven voice,—

"I cannot tell how much I thank you, Lionel. You always were a brave fellow."

His eyes filled with tears when she called him by his first name. That was good of her. It was kind, too, that she acknowledged, by her praise, their previous acquaintance.

"I did it for you," he said, huskily. "It was nothing. I am very glad."

"I think you would have done it for anyone—for the child's own sake," she said, gently.

And she took Willie up in her arms, for the child was all right now, but, feeling wet and uncomfortable, he had begun to cry.

"I will see you again," she said; and Lionel's heart bounded.

He got up with an effort and stood there very wet and draggled beside her.

"I—I am going away," he said, in a low tone. "I don't think I'd better stay any longer."

Sybil's eyes fell.

"Just as you think," she said.

"But there is one thing I want to ask," Lionel continued. "How did that child get those marks on his arm?"

"Oh," Sybil answered, readily, "that is nothing. He was born with those. But you ought not to stand here, wet as you are, and Willie—"

"I am going," he said, hurriedly. "Good-bye!"

She held out her hand very frankly.

"Thank you!" she said, with real warmth, and her eyes were quite misty. "You saved my boy's life, and I love him very dearly. I shall never forget it."

Lionel could not speak. He simply crushed the small hand she gave him in a fervent grasp and hurried away.

The next day he had left Eastbourne, and Willie watched his "pretty mamma" with wide curious eyes.

"Don't cry, mamma," he lisped. "Willie loves 'oo. Don't cry!"

But Sybil's tears would fall, and her heart ached sadly.

"I thought I had ceased to care so much for him," she said, in despair; "but it is of no use. I shall love him always, and yet I have no right to love him. It is wicked of me, but, oh, I cannot help it! Oh, Lionel! Why did you ever leave me?"

From that day, somehow, the sea-side ceased to please her, and she went home.

It was several weeks later that she had a note from the matron of the hospital whence she had taken Willie.

"My dear Miss Elmer," Mrs. Firth wrote, "a most extraordinary thing has happened. Willie's father has turned up, and has been here inquiring for him. In the first place a very strange mistake has happened. You know we have several babies here at one time—sometimes as many as

a dozen—and it often happens that in bathing the babies they get mixed up, and we can't tell which is which. The mothers have to help us out.

"But, if you will remember, Willie had no mother, and there was at the same time another baby here who was an orphan. One of these babies was the child of a poor, friendless woman, and the other belonged to a gentleman of means who had lost his wife, and who paid us to have his child properly cared for.

"He has been travelling abroad for several years, and has just returned, intending to take his child away. But when he came to get his child, it appears that the child was not here. The baby we had supposed was his was the child of the poor woman. He knew it was not his, because his own child had some peculiar birth-marks on one arm. You can easily understand how I felt when I found that our nurses had been so careless. Willie is this gentleman's child, and I am afraid you will have to give him up."

Sybil let the note fall and burst into tears. "It is always that way," she said—"everything I love is taken from me."

With a feeling of utter despair, she flung herself on the couch and lay there till a servant came to announce that there was a gentleman waiting to see her.

Sybil went down with a sinking heart. Her visitor was standing in the middle of the room, and she saw, with a strange flattering of the heart, that it was Lionel Vane.

He came forward with a feverish manner as she stood still in surprise, and he said, without waiting to greet her:

"Sybil, do you know that it is my child you have adopted?"

"Your child!" she echoed. "Willie is your child?"

"Yes," he went on hurriedly. "You heard of my marriage, I know. I blush to mention it, but I married a woman who was a drunkard. I was well punished for my folly. I do not excuse it, but I have always wanted you to know how it happened. I was intoxicated when I married her, and—"

"So I heard," Sybil said, half audibly.

"I did not love her. Love!" he repeated, with scorn. "I loathed her when I came to my senses."

"But how could you—how could you—" Sybil faltered.

"I have asked myself that question a hundred times. I do not know. When we quarrelled, I was wretched, and I did not care what I did. I did what I had never done before, and have never done since—I drank a good deal to drown my own misery. And one night, when I was under the influence of liquor, I married Eugénie Gomez. She is Willie's mother—the mother of my son. What a depraved woman she was you cannot imagine, but she led me a life of torment and mortification. She died finally from her own excesses, and I put the child in the home. There was nothing else I could do, for I had no one to take care of him."

"Your wife is dead then?" said Sybil, softly.

"She died shortly after Willie's birth."

"And you want your child, of course," she said, with a break in her voice. "It is quite natural."

"I did mean to take him away from the home," he said; "but when I heard it was you who had him, I felt sorry I had ever made any claim. You know, Sybil, there is no woman in the world whom I would sooner see the guardian of my child than you."

"But I cannot take him from you," she faltered. "He is yours."

"Not if you want him," Lionel answered, hurriedly.

And then, with a sudden burst of passion he cried,—

"Do you think I have ever ceased to love you? You have grown dearer to me every day since I lost you. Anything I have that you may desire, I will gladly give to you—even my child. If you will only say you forgive me, say you do not despise me!"

Sybil made a quick gesture toward him.

"Lionel!" she cried, holding out her arms, "I love you!"

He caught her to his breast with a wild and passionate joy.

"And you will forgive me!" he said, tremulously. "Oh, Sybil, I did not dare to ask! Will you be my wife now? Is that happiness still possible?"

She lifted her face and kissed him.

"Yes," she answered through her tears. "I forgave you long ago. You have been punished sufficiently, I think. Oh, Lionel, if you had only come back to me sooner!"

"But I did not dare," he answered. "I felt too base. And that day at Eastbourne I thought that you were married, that Willie was your own child."

"Well," she said, pressing her cheek against his breast, "I have you now, and I am not going to let you go again."

He tightened his arms around her.

"You need not fear," he answered. "The whole world could not drag me away."

The wedding that took place shortly after was a wonderful thing for the gossips; but what any one said mattered very little to Lionel and Sybil.

Willie went with them on their travels, and a happier child was never found in the care of a happier couple.

SIR LYNN'S LITTLE MAYBUD.

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(Continued from page 128.)

"Yes," she whispers, softly; "and—and our child's first petition shall be for our absent one."

She couldn't say the sweet term father or husband, poor stricken dove; even this sacred name is denied her, yet not one thought of blame does she harbour in her generous heart for the man who has heaped such misery on her innocent head.

"If he has erred he has grievously suffered;" she thinks, as she notes the ravages a week has made in his handsome face.

"I will frame an excuse for my hurried departure, so as to close the mouths of the servants," he says, more calmly. "They must never suspect the truth; their prying eyes must be blinded at the sacrifice of truth itself."

"Do what you deem best," she returns, submissively. "Only promise to write sometimes; it will sweeten the loneliness of my existence."

"Every month I will send you all news of myself; but I am tiring you, my own love. I must talk to you further upon this to-morrow."

"No," she says, impulsively. "We shall say good-bye now; it would not be safe to meet again. We are brave now, Lynn; the strength is given us. We dare not play with fate!"

He bows his head like a prisoner receiving his death-sentence, knowing the justice of the doom pronounced by his judge.

"Vetah, my love, I will obey," he answers humbly, his lips twitching nervously. "It would be sacrilege to try and persuade you from what is right."

He folds her to his heart in one long embrace, pressing burning kisses on eyes, lips and brow.

Very still she lies on that panting breast that may never shelter the little head, perhaps, in life again.

"Farewell, my own love!" he murmurs, placing her gently on the couch. "Farewell," and reels from the room with a stifled groan, feeling as if he would suffocate.

The servants looked aghast with astonishment when their master declares his intention of leaving the Court.

"I never heard such a mad freak in all my born days," observes cook to Coleman, the gardener, in strict confidence. "In the delicate state of the poor lamb's health and all, it's downright brutal, it is, snapping her fingers viciously in the direction of her master's room."

"It do about puzzle me, too! Why, I was never

so taken aback in all my life when he comes to me and says, 'Coleman, I am called away on business of the most vital consequence, which will admit no delay; be faithful and true to your mistress while I am away.' And true as I am standing here, he puts his hand into mine, and tears come into his eyes. I'm blest if I didn't feel queer myself too" (at this juncture his bird's-eye handkerchief comes out, and he blows his nose vigorously). "It was on the tip of my tongue to say there ought to be no business to drag a gentleman from his wife at such a time as this; but there was such a look in his face that I didn't dare to say what I was bursting to say."

"Well, it's all a mystery," Mrs. Barton declares, shaking her head sagely. "But we must do our best to stop those husbands' sharp clacks; that's our business at any rate."

"You may take your affidavit I shall be mum, and stop any of their gossip. Why, Heaven bless the sweet mistress, I'd fight for her—aye, to the last drop of blood in my veins."

"So will I, Coleman," she says emphatically. "So here's my hand on it," giving him her plump rosy hand, which he holds unnecessarily longer than the occasion demands.

"It's a pretty hand!" he whispers, confidently. "It's a pity not to mate it with a stronger one—like this for instance."

"Nasty, brown thing," she simpers; "why, it looks as brown as your old mould you are always dabbling with."

"My mould gives you plenty of fruit and vegetables," he retorts, hoefully.

"So it does, Coleman, dear!" this is said so gushingly that he finds it necessary to place his arm round her ample waist, just to try the length of his arm, and then a little shriek tells the astonishing fact that he has dared to rifle a kiss from those ripe lips—a kiss which costs two faithful hearts to the fortunes of the house of Myron.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE the roses fade a new-born rosebud blooms, fresh and fragrant at Myron Court—a tiny cherub, with large brown eyes and dimpled feet and hands.

Vetah gazes wistfully till her eyes get dim at the soft mite, and drinks in draughts of nectar—the sweet nectar of a young mother's love and pride for her first-born.

"What a darling it is!" Mrs. Rydon says fondly, as she decks baby in its lace-decked robes; "how Lynn could desert you at this moment I cannot comprehend. He must be devoid of heart altogether!"

"Mamma, do not, I beg, say such things!" Vetah pleads. "I tell you he was compelled; cannot you believe me?"

"I detest secrets of any kind, and this looks very much like one since you are unable to explain the business that has driven him away from his wife and child at the very crisis of her life even!"

"Forbear, mother mine, if you love me!" Vetah implores. "Do you think I would defend Lynn if he was not worthy my love?"

"I am deeply grieved, dear child, to vex or wound you," Mrs. Rydon returns anxiously; "but a mother's love is jealous, almost exacting. It is the feeling you will experience when this dear little one grows up."

"I feel awfully jealous already," Vetah says, smiling through her tears—tears at the bitter thought that hers and baby's life is to be desolate, with no loving protector to lean upon, but to stand alone—cruelly alone—in the world with a ban of dark suspicion hovering over their heads.

"I would not feel it so keenly, only there's Blanche's wedding to take place next month, and Lynn consented to be best man. It will cause so much comment," she says, querulously.

"It is impossible for everybody to keep up their engagements made months previously," she replies, half-childishly. "Besides, it is wrong to ascribe false motives of a husband to a wife because he is forced to be absent. Trust him for my sake, at least, even if you do not for his own!"

"I promise never to allude to the subject, child, since it is so painful to you. Forgive the over-anxious feeling of a mother," she says, soothingly, seeing how averse Vetah is to be questioned further concerning her husband.

July, hot and glowing, with countless flowers scattering their vivid blossoms and scent over turf, and well-kept gravel paths.

It is the day that Blanche is to become Lady Dynvor, and never was there a fairer or more regal bride, and so Vetah whispers affectionately into her ear as she assists her to adjust her veil.

"It is too bad of Lynn to fail us on this day of all days," says Blanche, peevishly. "It looks like a slight to Charles. I thought he would relent, even at the last moment. You said he might, did you not?"

"Yes! I—er—that is, I thought he might," she stammers, reddening guiltily. "But he has not forgotten you. These stars are really lovely, are they not?" this coaxingly.

"Yes, they are very fine," she says, as the jewels are fastened in her golden hair, "but—"

"There is mamma calling, and the carriage is at the door, so we must hasten!" observes Vetah, glad to change the subject, knowing there will be no opportunity for a recurrence of it in the hurry and bustle of the ceremony and departure of bride and groom.

CHAPTER IX.

THREE years have come and gone since Sir Lynn left his wife and home, a wanderer in a strange land.

His child is now a little fairy who can skip and prattle, to the joy of her mother's heart. Coleman worships the mite who toddles after him, her pinafore crammed with flowers, her face beaming with sunny smiles.

"I want woses for papa, Tolmy," she says, tugging at his white linen jacket. Tolmy is her name for Coleman.

"Roses for papa!" he cries in amazement. "How can you give your papa roses, Miss Maybud!"

"I've doing to pull dem to pieces, and mamma is to puts dem in a letter," she says, wisely, nodding her head comically.

Some of the finest specimens are plucked out of the greenhouse for the dainty little lady, who, by way of thanks, says,—

"You may tis me if oo likes, Tolmy, ony pease don't hurt me with your brown chin."

"I shall make a mistake and eat you up if you don't mind," he laughs, catching up the child, and kissing her very cautiously, lest his beard should offend her little ladyship.

"A woman wishes to see me, Eliza," Vetah says, in surprise. "What is her name?"

"That she will not give, my lady. All she says is that she must see you or Sir Lynn that it is a case of life and death, and she looks more like a ghost herself than a living woman, she is so terribly worn and ill."

"Poor thing!" her mistress says, pityingly; "perhaps she is in want; give her food."

"Oh, no, my lady! She is well dressed enough, my lady."

"Send her into me without delay," Vetah replies, quickly, but starts with some instinctive dread as a tall, gaunt woman, enters and raises her veil.

"Who are you?" she asks, tremulously, "and what do you want with me?"

Falling on her knees at the feet of Vetah, the woman says, in a wailing tone,—

"I want to die in peace, to repair a cruel injury done to you and your husband."

"What do you mean?" gasps the astounded Vetah.

"That my daughter, his former wife, was dead when he married you. Here is the certificate of her death. It was for greed and spite I came here last, and told him she was living. Can you forgive me?"

"You ask me something so hard, woman, if

you could only realise what I have suffered, and still suffer; my husband driven forth a wanderer, the ban of shame cast upon me and my innocent child! Sir Lynn is not here, and I thank Heaven it is so. He would forbid my forgiving you."

"Mamma, mamma, 'ook at the woses I've dot for papa," cries Maybud, dashing in gleefully, her little hands full of flowers.

Seeing a stranger she hides behind her mother's skirt, peeping forth timidly at the woman, whose frame is shaken by contrite sobs.

"Poor 'oman kying, mamma!"

Then before Vetah can stay her purpose Maybud darts out like a sunbeam, and throwing her dimpled arms around the suppliant's neck, kisses her, cooling tenderly,—

"Don't ky, 'oman, mamma won't be koes if you say you will be dood."

This is more than Vetah can withstand; raising her up she says,—

"Woman, go in peace; you are freely forgiven."

Still weeping, she impulsively kisses little Maybud, murmuring,—

"May Heaven bless and shield you."

The wanderer has returned to the fold, a gladsome light in his eyes, a smile on his sun-tanned face, for now the cloud of shame and despair has passed away out of his life for ever. The reunion is too sacred to lift the veil. Suffice it to say that the fearsome secret is always well kept. He with his child on his knee, and Vetah's hand resting lovingly on his shoulder, whispers,—

"Never to part, darling, I feel happy now." And so ends our story.

[THE END.]

SAVED.

—101—

My boy Mark had asked me to invite his betrothed to the Cedars, and having made Mark's wishes my law during the twenty-eight years of his life, I at once wrote to Miss Doris Mayburn and gave her a cordial invitation to visit me.

She accepted in a graceful, pretty note that prepossessed me in her favour, and at the time appointed I drove to the station and met her when the train arrived. As she was the only passenger who left the train at our station, I had no trouble about finding her, and greeted her affectionately.

She was very, very pretty; pure blonde, with a face like one of Raphael's cherubim, almost babyish in its round outlines, wondering blue eyes, and short golden curls. She was very small, with helpless, childlike ways, and I wondered greatly at my boy's choice.

For Mark, my grandson, orphaned in infancy, had grown to manhood under my care, and was a man grave, and rather sedate, of stern rectitude, devoted to his profession—that of a lawyer—and the last man in the world I should have expected to fall a victim to a baby face and childlike manner. And yet he loved Doris Mayburn with the first true, strong love of his heart, and with only perfection in her caressing ways.

In less than a week I ceased to wonder at Mark's infatuation. Doris was, without exception, the most lovable person I ever met in my long life of varied experience. She was nineteen years old, and had been most carefully educated, and behind her baby face had a well-stocked brain. Her singing was simply perfect for an amateur, and she played well, though her fingers were seldom on the piano keys except to accompany her sweet, pure voice.

One of her great charms was the tender deference she paid to my age, without seeming even to consider me too old for a confidante and companion. We saw Mark only from Saturday afternoon till Monday morning, at the Cedars was too far from London for daily trips. But

although Doris talked often of her betrothed, of the preparations for her approaching wedding, she never seemed weary or dull in our quiet life. She read well, and we passed hours with our favourite authors; she sang for me; she worked me a gorgeous sofa cushion, and we walked and drove out together.

But through all the charms of her manner, the innocent caressing ways habitual to her, there was an expression in her violet eyes that perplexed me. It was not sufficiently defined to be fear—more like a shadow; of fear—and it was brief, passing away like a summer cloud across the sunshine.

Often she would look her little hands together, till the pressure looked as if it must pain her, while in her eyes would come a hungry look, as if she was controlling some violent emotion by a great effort.

She had been at my house about three weeks, when I began to be troubled about the extra servant I had hired as her maid. She was a young girl from Ashurst, our post-town, who had been highly recommended to me by one of my old servants, and she was willing and respectful; but I doubted her honesty.

Having had the same servants about me for years—women of tried principle—I had become careless about locks and keys, and seldom used them; but little trifles of value began to disappear most marvellously after Jane came. A gold pencil-case with diamond top, that had belonged to my husband, was the first thing that I missed; then followed a card-case of silver; small trinkets disappeared, and I was thinking Jane must be sent away, when, one morning, going unexpectedly to my room, I saw, through the open door, a reflection in my long mirror.

Unseen myself, I watched Doris Mayburn as she softly opened my box of jewels, took out a pair of diamond earrings, and put them upon the bureau. In her eyes was the look of fear, new positive, defined terror; and her tiny hands worked convulsively as she held them over the trinkets. Suddenly she snatched them, secreted them in her pocket, turned, and saw—me.

With a cry that was terrible to hear, it was so full of despair, she literally threw herself at my feet, moaning as if in pain. I stood erect, looking at her. I am an old woman, and the new names for ladylike stealing were unknown to me.

My grandson's betrothed, grovelling at my feet, was simply a thief, who had robbed me, and allowed an innocent servant to be suspected; for she knew my resolution regarding Jane. Presently she looked up.

"You will not tell Mark!" she said, imploringly. Then, seeing, I suppose, my utter disgust in my face, she cried,—

"I cannot help it. You may blame me as you will, I cannot resist the inclination to steal. I do try, but when I see small articles I must take them. I do not want them; I will give you all I have taken back again, but I shall probably steal them again when I see an opportunity. I must do it!"

Then I took her from the ground, and looked into her eyes, trying to read the insanity I was sure was upon her. She lay in my arms like a child, sobbing pitifully, repeating her assertion of inability to resist the desire to steal, till, against my own reason, in spite of my rectitude and common-sense, I found myself petting and pitying her, as if she was the victim of a fever.

But I would not promise to keep secret what I had discovered. Though I was won over to a most profound pity, I shrank from the idea of my boy's wife being a thief.

It was a strange coincidence that on the very same evening Mark came home for his weekly visit, while we were chatting in the drawing-room, said, gravely,—

"I had a very painful case presented to me this morning. One of our leading city men wanted me to defend his daughter, who is the victim of kleptomania."

I felt Doris, who sat near me, shiver, and slip an ice-cold hand into mine.

"Perhaps you ladies," continued Mark, "do not know that kleptomania is a name for fashionable theft. We are old-fashioned folks here, and have always called a thief, a thief! It is

monstrous," he said, his eyes flashing, "to defend stealing because the thief is in high social position."

"But," I said, "they plead the temptation is irresistible."

"So may any thief plead! Supposing I were to walk into a bank, and feel an irresistible desire to run away with a few thousand pounds' worth of bank-notes. Do you imagine judge or jury would acquit me?"

"But," I urged again, "if you had a dear friend a victim to this disease—if it is a disease—would you judge her so sternly?"

"I would. I could far sooner forgive a poor, starving wretch who took my purse when driven by want to crime, than I could a thief who, needing nothing, robbed me and called the robbery kleptomania."

"But if it were a lady, delicate and refined, you would not send her to share the prison of common felons?"

"I would if she had fitted herself for their society by sharing their crime. Indeed, I should judge such a case far more severely, for there is no shadow of excuse for it. A poor girl, ignorant and starving, would have far more leniency at my hands than a lady who could so lower herself."

I looked at Doris. She was pale as death, and in her eyes was a steady, mournful look I had never before seen there.

"Mark," she said, "if you had a dear friend who was afflicted with kleptomania, how would you advise her to overcome the temptation?"

Something in the voice of his betrothed moved Mark deeply, for he replied with a strange solemnity,—

"As all other temptations must be overcome—by constant struggle and fervent prayer."

I thought the time had come for these two to fully understand the painful position, and made some excuse to leave the room.

Not until I heard my boy go upstairs to his own apartment would I re-enter the drawing-room.

Doris was there, deathly pale, but with a certain womanly expression new to her sweet face.

"I have told him," she said; and her voice sounded hollow and forced. "He will not give me up, but I have resolved to leave you all for a long, long time. I will try to overcome the affliction of my life by struggle and prayer, as my darling advises. If I conquer I will return; if not, Mark's wife shall never be a thief."

She rose as she spoke, and, kissing me fondly, went to her room. I thought to have a long talk with her, to offer sympathy and counsel, but in the morning we found her room vacant, the bed undisturbed. She wrote to me soon, telling me she had walked to Ashurst and had caught the last train to London.

"I leave home to-day," she wrote, "and unless I can come back to you cured I will come back no more."

In her room I found all the little trinkets I had supposed were in Jane's hands. Mark and I talked often and gravely of the child he loved, sometimes hopefully, but often, as time wore away, sadly. For my grandson had repented often of his harsh, stern judgment, and was willing to think there was really a disease in fault.

"And yet," he would say, with mournful eyes, "if it was kleptomania that made Doris take your trinkets, why should we have sent to penal servitude the burglar who was caught stealing the plate a few years ago? That poor wretch was driven to crime by starvation, but there was no sentimentality in his lawyer's plea. He was merely a thief, and received the punishment of a thief."

"And you would send Doris to prison too?"

"Heaven forbid! I cannot cease to love her, and pray that she may come back to us, as she promised."

So two years wore away, and we thought Doris was lost to us. Mark came every week, as usual, to spend Sunday with me, and we talked of his betrothed as we talk of the dearly-loved dead.

One Saturday afternoon I was in my own

room, sewing, when a knock upon my door was followed by the entrance of a lady, a little lady, who stood hesitating about entering, till I said,—

"Doris, dear child, welcome!"

Then she nestled in my arms in the old loving way. But in her face I read the truth I longed to see, the principle that had overcome her temptation, the triumph of prayerful effort.

The baby-look was gone, and the violet eyes, retaining all their sweetness, were full of gentle dignity. The baby manner, too, had vanished in a quiet, lady-like deportment, very graceful and winsome.

"My dear, dear child," I said, "you are more than welcome."

"You will believe me, then," she said, earnestly, "when I tell you I have conquered that horrible inclination!"

I assured her most warmly of my sincere belief in her statement, my deep joy in her triumph. She told me of her struggles, her prayers, and the gradual wearing away of the desire to appropriate the property of others.

"For a year," she said, "I have purposely watched the opportunities for theft, for you are the only one who ever detected me, the only person, excepting Mark, who knows of my old infirmity. I could have stolen largely from friends I visited, for even my own parents knew nothing of my besetting sin. But the desire has left me. Mark may trust me!"

And Mark did trust her, and has never regretted his confidence. He comes, with his wife and children, to pass the summer months at the Cedars, and he is not more stern and strict in his teaching to the little ones of the value of honesty than is Doris, his wife, who once believed herself an incurable kleptomaniac.

FOUND WANTING.

—30—

CHAPTER XXIX.

THERE, MADDIE, there's news," exclaimed Pelham Clifford, rushing upstairs into his wife's drawing-room, with a letter in his hand. "Christine writes they will come up to Charing-Cross Hotel to-morrow, and go down to Dover the next day."

"En route for where?" drawled Maddie.

"You always tell your news in halves, Pel."

"Why, to Cannes—I told you that before."

"Excuse me, you did nothing of the sort. However, I am very glad Dr. Hall at last allows Albert to go."

Pelham's delight was chilled by her excessive coolness, for which he could not at all account, not having a keen insight into the vagaries of this capricious young lady. She had been so struck with terror and dismay when she first heard of what still passed for an accident, so full of remorse, so anxious while Delmar lay between life and death, that Pelham supposed she would be as rejoiced as he was to hear that the doctors thought health so far advanced as to sanction a winter and spring in Cannes. He thereby made no allowance for Maddie's peculiarities. The pressure of fear, for her husband and herself—for in her best moments she seldom lost sight of that little person—being removed, she had time to reflect that Pelham was ridiculously anxious about Christine, and thought a great deal more of her than of his own wife—indeed there had been some scenes between the two. And, besides, a woman like Maddie never forgives a whilom lover for being able to live without her, and Pelham, in the innocence of his heart, had told her the substance of some words that had passed between himself and Delmar only a few days ago.

Delmar having told him that he was soon to be ordered abroad, Clifford had asked hesitatingly about Christine's movements, and Albert had answered, "Christine will go with me—I could not spare her." Pelham, in reporting this to Maddie, had remarked that he thought the relations between Albert and Christine were changed.

"Do you mean," Maddie asked sharply, "that they are good friends? I do dislike hints."

"I believe they are," Pelham answered; "it wasn't merely Albert's words—it was the way he said them."

"Well, if Christine doesn't manage him better than she did they won't be friends long," said Maddie, as if she could have given Christine a course of instructive lectures on the subject. Pelham, indignant at Maddie's stupid persistence in her idea that Christine was in fault, had blazed out in defence of his sister; he was annoyed, too, at Maddie's incredulity. She had retorted, and some sharp truths being said on either side, the scene ended in a storm of feminine tears. Pelham, man like, thought that when there was a reconciliation—and by the bye, he was getting rather tired of these last—Maddie would rejoice with him, and never imagined what was meant by her coldness on the present occasion.

"I should like to see them off," he said.

"Dear me, why? If Albert is well enough to travel, he is well enough to take care of Christine—and, besides, Evans and Fanny will be with them."

"Albert isn't well enough to have the least trouble. He is anything but strong. Besides, I did not say it was necessary—I said I should like to."

"You need not take me up so. Go if you like. Ever since Albert was ill you have been backwards and forwards to Knights Millwood as if telegrams were no use, and you must hear by word of mouth how he was, or whether Christine was still alive. I suppose it doesn't matter leaving me alone again. It's all very fine to say you three had the worst time. I don't know that—I had no one here to take care of me or sympathise, and I might be supposed to feel it a little—my own husband perhaps a murderer, and Albert dying."

"Maddie, that is not quite true. I was constantly at home, but how could I rest here when every minute almost might make me a murderer?"

"You might have thought of me. I was left in suspense."

"I telegraphed constantly."

"And shut out as if I had no concern with it at all," pursued Maddie, as if he had not spoken. "I suppose if I had offered to see him Christine would have been jealous."

"Jealous! Bah! If he had wanted to see you she would never have said him nay. I don't believe he did. As to concern you had a good deal too much."

"It's like a man to say that, and like you especially. I wonder who persuaded me," said Maddie, tauntingly; "and, after all, I dare say I could have got on with Albert."

At which Pelham, with something like an oath, kicked a footstool over angrily, in his passage to the door, and stalked out.

At breakfast the next morning Maddie announced her intention of calling at the Charing-Cross Hotel to say good-bye. Pelham said it was not necessary. Maddie replied it was only a proper attention.

"Delmar will be knocked up, and Christine busy," objected the husband.

"If she is I can assist her," was the serene response of the wife.

"Well, Maddie," he said, at last, "if you will have it, I don't think either of them will care about it."

"Which means you are jealous. Now I think it would be very much more marked for me to stay away."

There was enough truth in this to silence Clifford; but he had his revenge in saying again he should go down to Dover.

Maddie carried out her intention, dressed herself in a charming costume, and drove alone to the hotel, Pelham declining to accompany her. Christine received her, thanked her for coming, and said she would send to tell Albert she was there; he was only gone to see about the tickets.

Maddie protested, secretly sorry she had come, wishing with all her heart she could emulate Christine's graceful ease. Now that she was actually here, now that Albert might come in

any moment, her "proper attention" assumed the form it had held to her husband, and she heartily wished herself home again. Even the feeling that she was exquisitely dressed did not relieve her.

Christine, in her close-fitting, dark blue travelling dress, and carrying herself more like a Southern than an English woman, looked beautiful enough to win any eyes, be they man or woman's, from Maddie.

The latter began praising Colin, who lay at his mistress's feet—the handsome brute formed such a convenient theme to allay nervousness. She asked where Albert had got him, and did not like to add that he had not had him at Daneswood when she was at Knights Millwood. She was somehow half afraid of Christine.

The answer that Colin came from Strathairie, disconcerted her. Then Colin pricked up his silky ears and walked to the door, looking up expectantly; and when his master came in with a "Well, Colin!" acknowledged the notice with an extra importance of gait.

Maddie, as she rose, could have uttered an exclamation—the Albert she saw now seemed so changed from the Albert she had watched for daily at the white house. He was very pale, showing plainly signs of the struggle, mental and physical, he had barely come through, his movements measured, like those of a man who is half afraid to move. She remembered with a pang the careless free step with which she had swung up the road to the gate. As usual, she waited for his lead, uncertain how he would meet her—not with the silence, the broken words of last time, she soon saw.

There was not a tremor in his hand as he touched her, not a sign of flinching in the clear eyes that looked straight into hers. He was unembarrassed—simply the well-bred gentleman meeting a friend. She could only murmur, as she resumed her seat, "She was so glad he was better."

"Thanks," Delmar answered, sitting down near his wife; "it is very good of you to give us a look before we go."

Maddie felt that there was more in the words than lay on their surface—that with a woman's intuition he had mentally gauged her; she was the more certain of it when he began the conversation, throwing Christine into the back ground, as if he were determined she should not be put to the indignity of forming a subject of curious observation, to the woman who had been her rival. Maddie inwardly chafed, and showed it it unconsciously to the man who, as her lover, had learned to read every inflexion of voice and change of face. He was cool and quiet, whatever it cost him.

"Well," said Maddie, as she stood up to go—the position was insupportable for long—"we shall hear how the journey has passed. You take the dog too!"

"Oh, yes—Colin would break his heart if he did not go," said Delmar.

Maddie stooped to pat the tawny head. "Almost as inseparable as your wife," said she, half archly, but with an almost unconscious sneer.

She was looking up in her old bewitching way—the shade of her hat enriching the tints of her face. Delmar looked down at her steadily. If he had ever since his illness half-fared her power over him was not quite gone, she feared died this moment. He saw the charm, felt it in a certain degree, but it did not move him—a surer test than if the charm itself had been unperceived. As he answered her, he dropped his hand on Christine's shoulder as she stood beside him—both women felt the action to be deliberate.

"Not quite," he said, very gravely; "the one tie must be broken."

The pause, the unbroken conclusion, thrilled to the heart of the one woman—the other gave her head a little amused toss, and laughed a short laugh. She took leave rather hurriedly; Albert must not come down with her—it was not necessary—her cab was waiting. Albert, however, only held the door open for her, and followed her out. When he came back he sat silent for minutes, then came and leant over the

back of Christine's chair, and the girl smiled up at him gratefully.

"Christine, don't thank me," he said; "after all I, not Maddie, placed you in the position."

"Was that the thought that made you look so gloomy?" asked Christine, half-smiling again.

"Partly—not altogether. She made me angry for you and more than ever disgusted with myself. I kept comparing you two all the while, and afterwards I was wondering how I could have ever put her before you. For myself I am glad she came."

"Why?" with her large eyes a little surprised.

"You think it tried me. So it did, but sometimes," he said, "I have mistrusted myself—afraid if I saw her again some of the old glamour would come over me. Now I have proved myself—you may trust me still."

"I know it, Albert—I trusted you then," the girl answered gently.

Maddie, when she reached home, found her Aunt Elmhurst there, and told her story in sarcastic fashion. "Really one would have thought I had no business there," she said, laughing; "Albert, I am certain, resented it. How is he looking? Oh, handsome than ever, if that is possible. I should have said something pretty as Pelham's wife, about that horrid affair—shooting him, I mean—but I was afraid to—I couldn't imagine how he'd take it. Fickle men are, to be sure. Not that it matters to me, of course—if he cares for Christine and she chooses to forgive him, I'm sure I'm very glad."

"I hope you are, my dear," said the aunt, drily. She was not blind to the little angry sparkle in her niece's brown eyes.

(To be continued.)

THE rose of Sharon is one of the most exquisite flowers in shape and hue. Its blossoms are bell-shaped, of many mingled hues and dyes, and its history is legendary and romantic in the highest degree. In the East, throughout Syria, Judea, and Arabia, it is regarded with the profoundest reverence. The leaves that encircle the round blossom dry and close tight together when the season of blossom is over, and the stock withering completely away from the stem the flower is blown away at last from the bush on which it grew, having dried up in the shape of a ball, which is carried by the sport of the breeze to great distances. In this way it is borne over the sandy wastes and deserts, until at last, touching some moist place, it clings to the soil, where it immediately takes fresh root and springs to life and beauty again. For this very reason the Orientals have adopted it as the emblem of the resurrection. The dried flower is placed by the Judeans in a vase of water beside the beds of the sick, and if it expands by moisture the omen is considered favourable. If it does not, the worst is at all times feared.

ONE of the promised wonders for the Paris Exhibition of 1900 is to be a dress made of spider's web. The idea is by no means novel, for Reaumur and other men of science long ago thought that the delicate threads spun by the common or garden spider might be utilised for industrial purposes; and so far back as in 1700 some small articles—such as socks or mittens—of this material were submitted to the Académie des Sciences. But there was an insurmountable difficulty in domesticating the varieties of the insect found in Europe, or in collecting their produce in a wild state. Father Cambone, however, a Catholic missionary in Madagascar, has discovered a big spider, known to the Hovas as Halaba, which can be induced, under the influence of whiskey or chloroform, to yield some four thousand yards of thread per month; and this thread is so strong as to bear a weight of over half a pound, and so elastic as to stretch more than twelve per cent. of its length. The Halaba, moreover, is gregarious and very prolific. In the school of military ballooning, cords made from the new material have been used with success for the netting of balloons, combining, as they do, the maximum of strength and elasticity with the minimum of weight.

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FACETIE.

"You are not looking at my face now at all," said the sister. "No," observed the painter; "I'm putting in the expression now."

LITTLE WILLIE: "Pa, what is a pessimist?" Pa: "A married man who is afraid to stay away from home after office hours."

ASTRO: "Don't you believe that the world goes round?" Castro: "Yes. But not equally."

SEE: "Did you know that I am an actress now?" "Why, no. All I heard was that you had gone on the stage."

"I'm going home." "But there are two more acts." "I know it. That's why I am going home."

SMITH: "I have the greatest respect for the truth." His Friend: "You generally keep at a most respectful distance from it."

VISITOR: "But this portrait of Mr. Bulger is a good deal more than life-size." Artist: "I know it. This is the size he thinks he is."

BERTIE: "Are you dining anywhere on Thursday?" Appleby (eagerly): "Thursday—no." Bertie: "How hungry you'll be on Friday."

THE BRIDE: "I always heard that love was blind." The Brute: "But marriage is an excellent oculist."

TCYMAN: "I hear you are building a new house?" Snodgrass: "Yes; I couldn't very well build an old one, you know."

PROUD MOTHER: "Oh, John, the baby can walk!" Cruel Father: "Good! He can walk the floor with himself at night, then."

MRS. S.: "An heirloom, Johnnie, is something that's handed down from father to son." Little Johnnie: "Ugh! That's a funny name for old clothes."

WIFE: "Tom, my dear, do you think I made a mistake in naming baby after your rich uncle?" Tom: "No, my love; your mistake was telling him the baby looked like him."

MR. SPOONER (seriously): "Do you think your father would object to my marrying you?" Miss Sharpe: "I don't know; if he's anything like me he would."

SWELL: "Why is it that every clown has such a stupid face? Is he obliged to look stupid?" Clown: "Certainly. If I had your face my salary would be doubled at once."

WIFE: "What would you do if you had no wife to look after your mending, I'd like to know?" Husband: "Do! Why, in that case I could afford to buy new clothes."

THE EDITOR: "Boy, take the cat out of the room. I can't have it making such a noise while I am at work. Where is it?" Boy: "Why, sir, you are sitting on it."

"Isn't it awfully difficult," asked the gushing maiden, "to find new ideas for your plays?" "I don't know," replied the successful playwright, "I have never tried to."

"I DIDN'T know you were so sarcastic when I married you." "Possibly you have forgotten that I said 'This is so sudden' when you proposed after four years' courtship."

"Do you believe in love at first sight?" she asked. "Of course," answered the savage bachelor. "Do you suppose, if a man had the gift of second sight, he would fall in love?"

HOUSEKEEPER: "I ordered a dozen eggs to-day, Mr. Titefyt, and you only sent me eleven. How was that?" Grocer: "Well, ma'am, one of them was bad, and I didn't think you'd want it."

THE SON of a physician, a nervous little fellow, had heard his father discuss microbes. One night, hearing one of the children stirring, he cried out: "What is it, Lena? Burglars or microbes?"

"Do you love sister?" asked the young brother, who was temporarily entertaining a regular caller. "Why do you ask?" "Because she said last night that she'd give ten shillings to know. Own up, and I'll give you half."

WILLIE: "Mamma, they say history repeats itself, don't they?" Mother: "Yes, dear." Willie: "Well, why don't it repeat itself when I'm trying to learn it?"

NEW LODGER (sarcastically): "Is this all the soap there is in the room?" Landlady (decidedly): "Yes, sir; all I can allow in one room." New lodger: "Well, I'll take two more rooms. I've got to wash my face in the morning."

ETHEL: "Have you noticed how Lord Slab-sides drops his aspirants?" Penelope: "Oh, but that's nothing to the way he drops his vowels; papa says he has got more than a dozen of his 'o u's'."

"WHAT I want," said the eminent counsel, "to prove that my client is mentally deficient." "Certainly," replied his brother Q.C. "There won't be the least trouble in showing that, so long as he has employed you to defend him."

"I WONDER," said the man of a statistical turn, "I wonder how much powder is destroyed daily in useless salutes!" "There must be a lot," said the frivolous girl. "But I suppose women will go on kissing one another just the same."

MOTHER: "I gave each of you boys an orange. Charlie, you said you wouldn't eat yours until after dinner. And you, Jack, said the same. Have you deceived me?" Charlie: "No, mother; we didn't eat our own oranges. I ate Jack's and he ate mine."

SNAPPY INDIVIDUAL (smoothingly): "I suppose you consider yourself a gentleman?" Walter: "No, sir. I don't consider I am anywhere near a gentleman."

"THERE'S an account of a girl who climbed to the top of Snowdon and sang 'God Save the Queen!'" "She had some sense, hadn't she? It's too bad that some other girls are not as thoughtful when they want to sing."

STAGE MANAGER (to proprietor of the theatre): "Our scene-shifter wants a holiday. He says he hasn't been away for five years." Proprietor: "Well, tell him he cannot have one. He gets changes of scenery enough for anybody."

MOTHER: "How did your face get that strained, agonised look in your photograph? Did the light hurt your eyes?" Small Son: "No, ma. The man told me to try to keep still, an' I did."

HOFF: "Don't you get so sleepy that you can't hear the alarm clock these cold mornings?" Popp: "Why, no, not exactly. The clock wakes the baby, the baby wakes my wife—you know a woman never gets so dull that she can't hear the baby—and then she wakes me."

PARK KEEPER: "You ain't got no right to let your dog fight. He's breaking the rules." Polite Citizen: "Pardon me, I am not letting him fight. I disapprove of my dog's conduct. You have my full consent to seize and punish him." (Park keeper is sorry he spoke)

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SOCIETY.

THE engagements of the Prince of Wales are frequently booked for twelve months ahead.

QUEEN VICTORIA'S will is engrossed on vellum, quarto size, and is bound as a volume and secured by a private lock.

THERE is some probability of the quadrille again appearing at fashionable gatherings this season.

THE Queen has expressed her intention of inspecting the horse and field batteries and the battalion of the Honourable Artillery Company at Windsor on July 1.

It is calculated that 10,000,000 photographs of the Queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales are produced annually, and find a ready sale over the world.

THE crown of Holland is said to have cost £120,000. In 1829 it was stolen by burglars, and remained in their possession for nearly two years.

THE Crown Prince of Siam will soon be attached to a British Infantry regiment at Aldershot for about twelve months for a thorough course of drill and military instruction.

IN spite of his eighty-one years the King of Denmark looks, works, and converses like a man twenty years younger, and his spirits have also much improved of late.

CEAR NICHOLAS II. is said to have an aversion to the needless slaughter of animals of any kind. He has recently forsworn the pleasure of the chase, and the shooting of game, and the birds and beasts in the Imperial preserves live in undisturbed quiet.

PRINCE CHARLES of Denmark, whose superior officer is Captain Kongsdal, of Arctic fame, will be in harness the greater part of the summer, and the Princess will in all probability in the meantime remain with her mother.

It is expected that the Queen will reside at Windsor for about three weeks, leaving the Castle for Balmoral on the evening of Friday, May 26. The Court will not return to Windsor until after Ascot race-week.

It is believed that next year, when he is seventeen, Prince Arthur of Connaught will enter the Sixth Thuringian Infantry Regiment, the crack regiment of the Coburg army, of which Duke Alfred is chief, and to which his son also belonged.

THE Princess of Wales possesses a cross which is supposed to always bring good luck to its owner. It was formerly the property of the King of Denmark, having been discovered years ago in the grave of the beautiful Queen Dagmar.

QUEEN VICTORIA, since the beginning of her reign, has only signed one death-warrant, which was for an execution in the Isle of Man, the Act passed for relieving Her Majesty of signing death-warrants having by an oversight not included that part of Her Majesty's dominions.

A FIFTH Drawing-Room will be held at Buckingham Palace early in June, probably during the week between Epsom and Ascot. There will be four hundred presentations at the two Drawing-Rooms which are to be held next month, the Queen having limited the number at each function to two hundred.

THE Prince of Wales will pay a brief visit to Great Yarmouth next week at the close of the annual training of the Norfolk Artillery Militia, of which regiment H.R.H. is the honorary colonel, Lord Coke being the colonel in command. It is understood that Lord Wolsley will then inspect the regiment, the Prince of Wales being present. The Prince is to arrive at Yarmouth from visiting the Queen at Windsor Castle on the evening of Thursday the 25th inst., and he will stay there until Saturday the 27th, when he goes to Sandringham, returning to Marlborough House for the remainder of the season on Monday the 29th by an early train.

STATISTICS.

IN China 500,000 people live in boats.

THERE are at present about 15,000 Quakers in England.

THE population of London increases by about 100,000 a-year.

SOME London firms spend £5,000 yearly on telegrams only.

IN Prussia 413 school children under 15 years of age have committed suicide within the space of ten years. Of these 337 were boys and 76 girls.

PARIS has 87,655 trees in its streets, and each tree represents a cost to the city of £7. This makes, in round numbers, £600,000 worth of trees in the streets.

GEMS.

ENLARGE your tastes that you may enlarge your hearts as well as your pleasures; feel all that is beautiful, love all that is good.

THE child taught to believe any occurrence a good or evil omen, or any day of the week lucky, hath a wide inroad made upon the soundness of his understanding.

LARGE views, high hopes, and unselfish aims dissipate a whole army of petty trials, annoyances and irritations, and even greatly reduce real anxieties and sorrows.

TRUE independence never merges into isolation, but gladly welcomes every aid from every source—not in servile and indolent subjection, but as the growing plant welcomes the warm sun and the refreshing rain by which it is to gain in strength and fruitfulness.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

VEGETABLE PUDDING.—Ingredients: Equal quantities of spinach, peas (bottled), and carrots. the whites of two eggs, salt and pepper. Well wash the spinach. Cook each vegetable separately in boiling salted water. Drain off the water, then rub them through a wire sieve. Beat up the whites and add them to the vegetable. Season nicely, then press into a greased basin and steam for about half an hour. Turn out, and serve very hot.

WHEATEN MEAL BISCUITS.—Half-pound wheaten meal, two ounces butter, one egg, a little milk, two ounces sugar, two teaspoonfuls baking powder; rub the butter carefully among the flour and baking powder, add the sugar, beat up the egg, and stir it in, adding as much milk as is necessary to make a stiff paste; roll this paste one eighth of an inch thick, cut into round biscuits, prick on the top, and bake till ready in a moderate oven.

BROWN PUDDING.—Ingredients: Three-quarters of a pound flour, six ounces suet (beef), one gill (or teaspoonful) treacle, one egg, one level teaspoonful carbonate of soda, one tablespoonful milk. Thoroughly grease a pudding-basin or mould. Mix the flour with carbonate of soda. Take all the skin off the suet, cut it into thin flakes, then chop it till it is about as fine as the grains of coarse oatmeal. While chopping it sprinkle in some of three-quarters of a pound of flour to keep it from sticking together. Next mix all the suet with the flour. Break the egg into a basin, beat it till frothy with a fork, stir in the treacle and milk. Mix these three with the flour, &c. Pour this mixture into your greased basin and stand it a large saucepan, with enough boiling water to come barely half-way up the basin. Put on the lid, put the same pan over the fire and steam for three hours. Then take the basin, turn out the pudding carefully, and pour round extra treacle which you have made hot. Be sure and take care not to let the water boil away during the cooking, or the pudding will get burnt.

MISCELLANEOUS.

WOMEN farm labourers in Poland earn about fivepence a day.

A GOOD camel will travel a hundred miles day for ten days through the desert.

It is usually considered that an adult should drink about three pints of liquid a day.

OVER £200,000 worth of diamonds are stolen every year from the South African diamond-mines.

ABOUT 40,000 people in England pay a guinea a year for the privilege of displaying their crests on their stationery and plate.

RUSSIAN railways are the most dangerous in the world. Thirty persons in every million passengers are either killed or hurt.

IN certain parts of Africa it is considered a mark of disrespect to bury out of doors at all. Only slaves are treated in such unceremonious fashion. The honoured dead are buried under the floor of the house.

IN Serbia there still survives a wonderful old institution known as the Zadruga. It is the living together of a whole tribe, numbering about 100 persons, all under the absolute authority of one chief. He keeps all the money, makes all the purchases, and decides the minutest details of family life.

It has been supposed that the swallow is more rapid in its flight than almost any winged creature, but the dragonfly easily outwings it. An observer of insect-life related an account of a chase between a swallow and an immense dragonfly, in which the contest lasted a long time. The swallow evidently had hopes of catching the insect, but finally, after a long campaign, gave it up and let the fly escape. It has been declared that a fly confined in a room would speedily clear it of mosquitoes, but repeated experiments failed to substantiate this claim.

Few countries have suffered so many changes of name as Ireland. In the time of Ptolemy the island was known as Scythia. Diodorus Siculus calls the island Iria, or Iria; in the *De Mundo*, credited by some scholars to Aristotle, it is called Irenne; in the *Argonautics* of Orpheus, it appears as Irtius; Strabo called it Iren; Caesar, Tacitus and Pliny mentioned it as Hibernia; Mela called it Javerna. The native names in Celtic are Ir, Eri, or Erin. Ptolemy mentions it under the name of Ogygia. The name Ireland, it is no doubt derived from the native Ir, or Eri, but when it came into general use is a question concerning which scholars are much at variance.

A GERMAN authority has recently announced the discovery of a tree in the forests of Central India which has most curious characteristics. The leaves of the tree are of a highly sensitive nature, and so full of electricity that whoever touches one of them receives an electric shock. It has a very singular effect upon a magnetic needle, and will influence it at a distance of even seventy feet. The electrical strength of the tree varies according to the time of day, it being strongest at midday, and weakest at midnight. In wet weather its powers disappear altogether. Birds never approach the tree, nor have insects ever been seen upon it.

THE discovery of the principle of the manufacture of satin was a pure accident. The word "satin" which originally was applied to all silk stuffs, has, since the last century, been used to designate simply those tissues which only present a lustrous surface. The discovery was made by a silk weaver named Octavio Mal. During a dull period of business one day he was pacing before his loom, not knowing how to give a new impulse to his trade. As he passed the machine each time, he pulled some short threads from the warp, and, following an old habit, put them into his mouth and rolled them about, soon after spitting them upon the floor. Later he discovered a little ball of silk upon the floor of his shop, and was astonished at the brilliancy of the threads. He repeated the experiment, and eventually employed various judicious preparations, and succeeded in giving satin to the world.

Spring Cleaning



No one knows better than the good housewife the work and worry of this trying season. No one knows better the need of a good soap for Spring cleaning—soap that requires no exhausting expenditure of elbow-grease. What is the use of running down the nervous system by doing the soap's share of the work as well as your own? Why use a common soap of low cleansing properties? Why not use

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MAIMIE.—Not compulsory.
T. O. R.—Employ a solicitor.
ALMA.—A week's notice is necessary.
TRIMBUCK.—It depends on the distance travelled.
DOUBTFUL.—The "got" is insolent and superfluous.
GERCHEN.—It would be illegal, being clearly a lottery.
CHRY.—It is not obligatory but very advisable in most cases.
POOR WOMAN.—That would rest with the court to decide.
ANKNOWN.—It is purely a case for the advice of a solicitor.
S. W.—Shipbuilders and shipowners would be the most likely.
MINFORTUNE.—You appear to have a good case for compensation.
R. D. C.—Everything depends on personal influence and connection.
MARCOS.—You are liable for her maintenance and that of the child.
WORKING DOZ.—To send it to the dyer is the best remedy we can give.
TOM'S DARLING.—No collecting stations in England, both are recruited locally.
CHODROPPER.—A lady's feet should equal in length one-seventh of her height.
P. Y.—We do not think you are entitled to pension, but apply to secretary, Chelsea Hospital, stating your service.
IN DESPAIR.—The scars made by smallpox are irremediable; but they become less conspicuous as age advances.
ONE IN ANXIETY.—You might expect a reply from the Cape in about three weeks from date of posting letter in London.
REGULAR BEAUTY.—A perfectly-formed face is one-third forehead, one-third nose, and one-third the lower part of the face.
MINDX.—Half the ships in the world are British. The best of them can be converted into ships of war in forty-eight hours.
SAILOR'S LASS.—The Goodwin Sands are quicksands, during the flow of the tide. At the ebb, persons may walk upon them without danger.

T. L.—The next leap year will be 1904. The even centuries, like 1900, do not count as leap years.

MILKED.—A little hot almond oil put into ear often softens the wax, but it may be necessary to use syringe, and that should be done by qualified hand.

O. R.—If men are really wanted you can ascertain all about it by writing to the Emigrants' Information Office, 81, Broadway, Westminster, London, S.W.

CURIOUS.—Cannot give you any idea of the value of your specimen; the different species vary much in size. Some are very common, others scarce.

LADY'S COMPANION.—Lemons can be kept a considerable length of time—a couple of months, even—in dry sawdust or sand. The sawdust must be inodorous.

HOPE.

His in the glorious future,
 Luring us ever afar,
 Leadeth our hope's best fruition:
 Watched by love's guiding star.

Anxious our eyes scan the darkness,
 Eager to fathom its gloom;
 Ofttimes the heart groweth weary,
 Longing for love's perfect bloom.

Patience, oh heart of my heart!
 Day needs must follow the night;
 Sadness reacts unto gladness,
 Hope keeps love's flame ever bright.

Some day, we know not how soon, dear,
 All that is dim will grow clear,
 And then, heart to heart, we will journey
 Onward to life's closing year.

S. R. D.—Stains on the fingers may be removed by rubbing salt and lemon-juice on the spots until they disappear. Wash afterwards with clean water.

YOUNGSTER.—The guinea-pig grows more quickly than any other quadruped. It is fully grown when six weeks old, and begins to bear young at two months.

HARMONY.—Yellow piano keys may be whitened by brushing them over with a mixture of half an ounce of nitric acid and five ounces of soft water.

PARTICULAR.—To keep the mouth in a healthy condition the teeth should be well brushed every morning, and the mouth rinsed out after each meal.

PLAIN WIFE.—A husband naturally likes his wife to look as well as possible, and is pained when invidious comparisons are instituted between his own and those of others.

BETTY.—If the dress is only slightly soiled rub it with plenty of clean fresh breadcrumbs; take plenty of time and plenty of crumbs or you will not have the effect; rub hard and change the crumbs often.

MRS GANTS.—Shake in a little finely powdered and sifted dry starch before putting on the gloves, and you will either do away with, or greatly reduce the injury, and keep them looking well twice as long.

MR SWEETHEART.—An excellent furniture polish may be made by thoroughly mixing one part of raw linseed oil with two of turpentine. Apply vigorously with a piece of soft flannel after the furniture has been carefully dusted.

COWSLIP.—Silks are easily washed by the aid of ammonia, a little of which should be added to the soap lather in which they are kneaded (not rubbed). Grease spots must be removed with benzine before washing.

EVE.—Courtneying went out with wide skirts; it looked well when the woman seemed to subside gracefully into herself; but in these days, when the nether garments of women are somewhat tight to the figure, courtneying would be somewhat hazardous and likely to cause spasmodic action, consequently bowing has now entirely superseded courtneying.

OLD READER.—To restore black lace which has become rusty, add to half a cup of rain-water one teaspoonful of borax, and the same quantity of alcohol; squeeze the lace carefully through this three or four times, and then rinse in a cup of hot water in which a black kid glove has been boiled, pull out the edges of the lace until nearly dry, and press for two or three days between the leaves of a heavy book.

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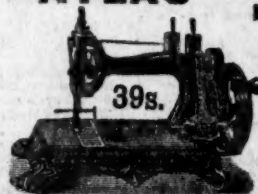
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ous ACIDS, which RUIN your metals and
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